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The Works of William Cowper, Esq., Comprising His Poems, ...

William Cowper, Robert Southey

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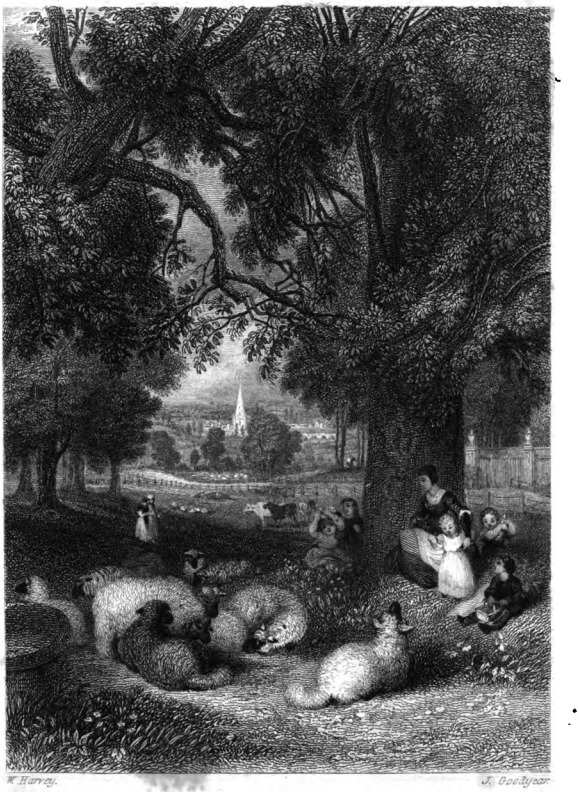

W. Harvey. J. Goodyear.

CHALK, FROM THE GROVE AT WESTON.

"Now in the spring and playtime of the year,
That calls the unwonted villager abroad
With all her little ones."

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY BALDWIN & CRADOCK, PATERNOSTER ROW 1836.

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THE LIFE AND WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER,

ESQ.

EDITED BY ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ. LL.D.

VOL. XV.

LONDON:
BALDWIN & CRADOCK, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1837.

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THE

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.

COMPRISING

HIS POEMS,

CORRESPONDENCE, AND TRANSLATIONS.

WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE EDITOR,

ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq. LL.D.

POET LAUREATE, ETC.

VOL. XV.

LONDON:
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1837.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE present volume concludes an edition of Cowper's Works, which the sanction of his still surviving administratrix, Mrs. BODHAM, and the access which the Editor has obtained to every collection of the Poet's letters, has enabled him to render as complete as it can be made from any known materials. He is obliged to the Rev. Egerton Bagot for permitting him to inspect the letters addressed to his father, Cowper's earliest correspondent, and the only one of his early friends who sought him in his retirement. To Mr. Jekyll he is obliged for access to those addressed to Mr. Hill. Mrs. Charlotte Smith favoured him with the letter to her mother, who in her own generation was not surpassed as a novelist, nor equalled as a poetess. From his old friend Mr. Cottle the two letters to Mr. Churchey, were obtained, the Welch attorney[1], who sent Cowper his verses to revise, and obligingly asked,

> "Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
> Pursue the triumph and partake the gale?"

He has also to thank Mr. Meek for entrusting him with Cowper's interleaved and annotated copy of the Paradise Lost, purchased by that gentleman at the sale of Hayley's Library.

But the Editor has not yet completed a task which

[1] Vol. ii. p. 282. Vol. vi. p. 45.

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has become to him a labour of love. Lives of Mr. Newton and of Madam Guyon were proposed in the Prospectus of this Edition, when the great accession of unpublished letters could not be foreseen. In some of those contained in the present volume, either now first printed, or in which passages have been restored, circumstances appear that should have been noticed in the poet's life, had his biographer been acquainted with them in time. It is his intention therefore, in two volumes under the title of Cowperiana to supply what has been left undone, to comprise whatever additional information he has collected from papers now in his possession, to include the literary history of Cowper's family, and to complete that of the literary friends with whom he was connected in early, or in declining life. The volumes though distinct from this complete edition of Cowper's Works, will be printed in the same form, and embellished in the same manner.

One mistake however which Hayley has made, and which Mr. Grimshawe has repeated, it is proper to correct in this place. They have stated that Cowper died intestate,—whereas he left a will,—and such a one, that, though its provisions had been nullified by the lapse of time, and the death of the principal legatee, it certainly would not have been withheld, either from, or by his first biographer, had not Lady Hesketh wished as much as possible to withhold every thing relating to his narrow circumstances, or his malady, both which it will be seen are alluded to with much feeling in this affecting document.

Keswick, Aug. 12, 1837.

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EXTRACTED FROM THE REGISTER OF THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY.

I Wᴹ. Cowper, of Olney, in the county of Bucks, do make this my last Will and Testament. I give to Mrs. Mary Unwin the sum of three hundred pounds, or whatever sum shall be standing in my name in the books of the Bank of England at the time of my decease. I give to Mr. Joseph Hill, of Great Queen Street, whatever money of mine he may have in his hands, arising from the bond of my Chambers in the Temple, or may be due for the same at the time of my decease: and my desire is, that such money as he may have received on my account in the way of contribution, and not remitted to me, may be returned to those who gave it, with the best acknowledgements I have it in my power to render them for their kindness. I have written this with my own hand, and the contents may sufficiently prove that I am in my senses.

May 20, 1777. Wᴹ. COWPER.

Eighteenth Aug. 1800.

On which day appeared personally Theodosia Hill and Frances Hill, both of Reading in the county of Berks, spinsters, and jointly and severally made oath that they knew and were well acquainted with William Cowper, formerly of the Temple, London, afterwards of Olney in the county of Bucks, but late of East Dereham in the county of Norfolk, Esquire, deceased, and having frequently seen him write and subscribe his name, are thereby become well acquainted with his manner and character of hand-writing and subscription; and having now carefully viewed and perused the paper writing hereto annexed, purporting to be and containing the last Will and Testament of the said deceased, beginning thus, "I Wm. Cowper, of Olney in the county of Bucks, do make this my last Will and Testament," and ending thus, "I have written this with my own

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hand, and the contents may sufficiently prove that I am in my senses," and thus subscribed, "Wm. Cowper," they the appearers do verily and in their consciences believe the whole series and contents of the said paper writing, beginning, ending, and subscribing as aforesaid, to be all of the proper hand-writing and subscription of him the said William Cowper, Esquire, deceased. THEO. HILL. FRANCES HILL.—Same day the said Theodosia Hill and Frances Hill were duly sworn to the truth of this affidavit, before me, PH. NIND, Commissioner.

ON the sixth day of September, in the year of our Lord 1800, administration with the will annexed, of all and singular the goods, chattels, and credits of William Cowper, formerly of the Temple, London, afterwards of Olney in the county of Bucks, but late of East Dereham in the county of Norfolk, Esquire, deceased, was granted to Dame Harriet Hesketh, widow, the cousin german and one of the next of kin of the said deceased, she having been first sworn by Commissioner duly to administer, no executor or residuary legatee being named in the said will.

ON the twenty-sixth day of November, 1807, administration with the will annexed, of the goods, chattels, and credits of William Cowper, formerly of the Temple, London, afterwards of Olney in the county of Bucks, but late of East Dereham in the county of Norfolk, Esquire, a bachelor, deceased, left unadministered by Dame Harriet Hesketh, widow, deceased, whilst living the cousin german and one of the next of kin of the said deceased, was granted to Anne Bodham, widow, the cousin german also and one other of the next of kin of the said deceased, having been first sworn by Commissioner duly to administer, no executor or residuary legatee being named in the said will.

CHAS. DYNELEY.
JOHN IGGULDEN.
W. F. GOSTLING. } Deputy Registers.

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Obliged & Obedient Servant
Anne Bodham.

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THE

LETTERS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Huntingdon, July 3, 1765.

WHATEVER you may think of the matter, it is no such easy thing to keep house for two people. A man cannot always live upon sheeps' heads, and liver and lights, like the lions in the Tower; and a joint of meat, in so small a family, is an endless encumbrance. My butcher's bill for last week amounted to four shillings and ten-pence. I set off with a leg of lamb, and was forced to give part of it away to my washerwoman. Then I made an experiment upon a sheep's heart, and that was too little. Next I put three pounds of beef into a pie, and this had like to have been too much, for it lasted three days, though my landlord was admitted to a share in it. Then as to small beer, I am puzzled to pieces about it. I have bought as much for a shilling, as will serve us at least a month, and it is grown sour already. In short, I never knew how to pity poor housekeepers before; but now I cease to

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wonder at that politic cast which their occupation usually gives to their countenance, for it is really a matter full of perplexity.

I have received but one visit since here I came. I don't mean that I have refused any, but that only one has been offered. This was from my woollen-draper; a very healthy, wealthy, sensible, sponsible man, and extremely civil. He has a cold bath, and has promised me a key of it, which I shall probably make use of in the winter. He has undertaken, too, to get me the St. James's Chronicle three times a-week, and to show me Hinchinbrook House, and to do every service for me in his power; so that I did not exceed the truth, you see, when I spoke of his civility. Here is a card-assembly, and a dancing-assembly, and a horse-race, and a club, and a bowling-green, so that I am well off, you perceive, in point of diversions; especially as I shall go to 'em, just as much as I should if I lived a thousand miles off. But no matter for that; the spectator at a play is more entertained than the actor; and in real life it is much the same. You will say, perhaps, that if I never frequent these places, I shall not come within the description of a spectator; and you will say right. I have made a blunder, which shall be corrected in the next edition.

You are an old dog at a bad tenant; witness all my uncle's and your mother's geese and gridirons. There is something so extremely impertinent in entering upon a man's premises, and using them without paying for 'em, that I could easily resent it if I would. But I rather choose to entertain myself with thinking how you will scour the man about, and worry him to death,

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if once you begin with him. Poor toad! I leave him entirely to your mercy.

My dear Joe, you desire me to write long letters—I have neither matter enough, nor perseverance enough for the purpose. However, if you can but contrive to be tired of reading as soon as I am tired of writing, we shall find that short ones answer just as well; and, in my opinion, this is a very practicable measure.

My friend Colman has had good fortune; I wish him better fortune still; which is, that he may make a right use of it. The tragedies of Lloyd and Bensley are both very deep. If they are not of use to the surviving part of the society, it is their own fault.

I was debtor to Bensley seven pounds, or nine, I forget which. If you can find out his brother, you will do me a great favour if you will pay him for me; but do it at your leisure.

Yours and theirs,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, August 14, 1765.

BOTH Lady Hesketh and my brother had apprized me of your intention to give me a call; and herein I find they were both mistaken. But they both informed me, likewise, that you were already set out for Warwickshire; in consequence of which latter intelligence, I have lived in continual expectation of seeing you, any time this fortnight. Now how these two ingenious personages (for such they are both) should mistake an expedition to French Flanders for a journey to

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Warwickshire, is more than I, with all my ingenuity, can imagine. I am glad however, that I have still a chance of seeing you, and shall treasure it up amongst my agreeable expectations. In the mean time you are welcome to the British shore, as the song has it, and I thank you for your epitome of your travels. You don't tell me how you escaped the vigilance of the custom-house officers, though I dare say you were knuckle-deep in contrabands, and had your boots stuffed with all and all manner of unlawful wares and merchandizes.

You know, Joe, I am very deep in debt to my little physician at St. Alban's, and that the handsomest thing I can do will be to pay him *le plutôt qu'il sera possible*, (this is vile French, I believe, but you can, now, correct it.) My brother informs me that you have such a quantity of cash in your hands, on my account, that I may venture to send him forty pounds immediately. This, therefore, I shall be obliged if you will manage for me; and when you receive the hundred pounds, which my brother likewise brags you are shortly to receive, I shall be glad if you will discharge the remainder of that debt without waiting for any further advice from your humble servant.

I am become a professed horseman, and do hereby assume to myself the stile and title of the Knight of the Bloody Spur. It has cost me much to bring this point to bear; but I think I have at last accomplished it. My love to all your family.

Yours ever,

W. C.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Nov. 5, 1765.

I WROTE to you about ten days ago,

> Soliciting a quick return of gold,
> To purchase certain horse that like me well.

Either my letter or your answer to it, I fear, has miscarried. The former, I hope; because a miscarriage of the latter might be attended with bad consequences.

I find it impossible to proceed any longer in my present course, without danger of bankruptcy. I have therefore entered into an agreement with the Rev. Mr. Unwin, to lodge and board with him. The family are the most agreeable in the world. They live in a special good house, and in a very genteel way. They are all exactly what I would wish them to be, and I know I shall be as happy with them as I can be on this side of the sun. I did not dream of this matter till about five days ago: but now the whole is settled. I shall transfer myself thither as soon as I have satisfied all demands upon me here.

Yours ever,

W. C.

I know nobody so like Mrs. Unwin as my Aunt Madan, I don't mean in person, for she is a much younger woman, but in character.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR SEPHUS, Nov. 8, 1765.

NOTWITHSTANDING it is so agreeable a thing to read Law Lectures to the Students of Lyons' Inn, especially to the reader himself, I must beg leave to waive it. Danby Pickering must be the happy man; and I heartily wish him joy of his deputyship. As to the treat, I think if it goes before the lecture, it will be apt to blunt the apprehension of the students; and if it comes after, it may erase from their memories impressions so newly made. I could wish, therefore, that for their benefit and behoof, this circumstance were omitted. But if it be absolutely necessary, I hope Mr. Salt, or whoever takes the conduct of it, will see that it be managed with the frugality and temperance becoming so learned a body. I shall be obliged to you if you will present my respects to Mr. Treasurer Salt, and express my concern at the same time, that he had the trouble of sending me two letters upon this occasion. The first of them never came to hand.

I think the Welshman must *morris*;—what think you? If he withdraws to his native mountains we shall never catch him; so the best way is to let him run in debt no longer.

As to E—, if he will listen to any thing, it must be to a remonstrance from you. A letter has no more effect upon him, than a messenger sent up to a paper kite; and he will make me pay the postage of all my epistles into the bargain.

I shall be obliged to you if you will tell me whether

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my exchequer is full or empty, and whether the revenue of last year is yet come in, that I may proportion my payments to the exigencies of my affairs.

My dear Sephus, give my love to your family, and believe me much obliged to you for your invitation. At present I am in such an unsettled condition, that I can think of nothing but laying the foundation of my future abode at Unwin's. My being admitted there, is the effect of the great good nature and friendly turn of that family, who I have great reason to believe are as desirous to do me service as they could be after a much longer acquaintance. Let your next, if it comes a week hence, be directed to me there.

The greatest part of the law books are those which Lord Cowper gave me. Those, and the very few which I bought myself, are all at the Major's service.

Stroke puss's back the wrong way and it will put her in mind of her master. Yours ever,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR SEPHUS, Dec. 3, 1765.

THAT I may return as particular an answer to your letter as possible, I will take it *item* by *item*.

First, then, I rejoice with you in the victory you have obtained over the Welshman's pocket. The reluctance with which he pays, and promises to pay, gives me but little concern, further than as it seems to threaten you with the trouble of many fruitless applications hereafter, in the receipt of my lordship's rents.

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Secondly, I am glad that you have received some money on my account; and am still more pleased that you have so much in bank, after the remittances already made. But that which increases my joy to the highest pitch of possible augmentation, is, that you expect to receive more shortly.

Thirdly, I should be quite in raptures with the fair promises of Mr. E—, if I believed he was in earnest. But the propensity of that gentleman to indulge himself in a jocular humour upon these serious occasions, though it is very entertaining, is not quite so good a joke as the performance of those promises would be. But men of wit are apt to be a little whimsical.

Fourthly, I do recollect that I myself am a little guilty of what I blame so much in Mr. E—: in the last letter I wrote you, having returned you so facetious an answer to your serious enquiry concerning the entertainment to be given or not to be given to the gentlemen of New Inn, that you must needs have been at a loss to collect from it my real intentions. My sincere desire, however, in this respect is, that they may fast; and being supported in this resolution, not only by an assurance that I can, and therefore ought to make a better use of my money, but also by the examples of my predecessors in the same business, Mr. Barrington, and Mr. Schutz, I have no longer any doubt concerning the propriety of condemning them to abstinence upon this occasion; and cannot but wish that point may be carried, if it can be done without engaging you in the trouble of any disagreeable haggling, and higgling, and twisting, and wriggling, to save my money.

Lastly, if I am not mistaken, I owe Thurlow five

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guineas. Be so kind as to pay him when he happens to fall in your way.

Yours, my dear Joe,

W. C.

The fire of the general election begins to smoke here already.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR SEPHUS, Huntingdon, March 10, 1766.

I THINK the remainder of Dr. Cotton's account is sixty-five pounds. I should have advised the payment of it before this time, but the time of general payment advances apace, and I have been afraid of wanting money for other purposes. In the pleasant month of May, I intend to discharge a half-year's reckoning with Mrs. Unwin. Soon after that I shall have servants' wages to pay, and half-a-year's maintenance of a small youth whom I brought with me by way of pensioner from St. Alban's. The whole amount of these three articles will be about sixty pounds. If, *in these circumstances*, and *in this situation*, you think I can afford to quit scores with the little Doctor, I shall be obliged to you if you will do it forthwith. You may contrive, when you send him the cash, to ask whether he is fully paid or no, and if not, how much remains due, and unsatisfied. More debts than money has been my distress this many a day, and is likely to continue so.

I have not seen the new play, nor is my curiosity so much agog, as one would have expected. We live

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much out of the theatrical sphere. My connexion with Colman is probably at an end, and it would give me therefore more pain than pleasure to read his productions. I have seen the Epilogue and think it wonderfully silly. I ask Fanny's pardon, for I recollect it is Garrick's. My love to your family.

Yours, my dear Sephus,

WM. COWPER.

Remember me to my Uncle when you see him.

TO MR. JOSEPH HILL,

AT THE CHANCERY OFFICE, LONDON, OR IN COOKE'S COURT, CAREY STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

If not at either of the above places, to be forwarded to him immediately.

DEAR SEPHUS, Aug. 16, 1766.

UNCERTAIN whether or no this will ever reach your hands, I shall lay an embargo upon all that wit and humour which generally pours itself out in my epistles, and only write the needful.

I have a bill to pay here, and immediate occasion for cash besides. Twenty pounds will answer both these emergencies. I should be glad, therefore, if my finances will stretch so far, of a bank note by the first opportunity to that amount.

I am much concerned to hear of Ashley's illness. You will oblige me by sending me some account of him. Yours, dear Joe,

W. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR SEPHUS, No date.

I SENT you a scrap this morning, but the post not being yet gone out, I shall trouble you with another scrap, upon the subject of yours which I have just received.

I am sorry my finances are not only exhausted, but over-drawn. This being the case I shall choose to let the draper's bill at this place remain unpaid a while longer, till cash comes in. I shall lower my demands therefore, and, instead of twenty pounds, must beg of you to convey to me five guineas for immediate use. My brother is gone into the North, with no more money than he wants, and will return I suppose, wanting more than he has. I thought he had made out our account with Eamonson, for I charged him by letter, just before he set out for London, not to forget it.

These deficiencies of money frighten me, lest I should not be able to continue in this comfortable retreat, for I shall never, I doubt, find such another. Another half-year will be due to Mr. Unwin in November, which must be paid him at the time, if I sell the only hundred I have for the purpose. I was always good at selling. It has, as you say, been an expensive year: I shall hope better things of the next.

I rejoice with you in the snugness of your situation, and if you continue to like it, wish you may always continue to be in the same, or just such another.

My love attends your family. Yours, dear Joe,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Oct. 9, 1766.

It would be rather an unreasonable proceeding methinks, to trouble you so frequently as I do with my paltry affairs, and by way of recompense to make use of your money without remembering to restore it. That I may act therefore more in character as a reasonable being, I desire you will be so kind as to send me a letter of attorney to empower you to sell as much of the hundred pounds as my arrears with you amount to. Mr. Unwin's forty guineas will be due on the eleventh of November. If my treasury has been sufficiently replenished to answer that demand, or is likely to be so before the time mentioned, well and good. If not, I must beg you to dispatch the whole hundred pounds, that the money may be forthcoming. My draper's bill, amounting to about fourteen pounds, I shall endeavour to discharge out of my right breeches pocket, which I hope will be rich enough for the purpose.

My brother is returned from Yorkshire, and will send you a copy of our account with Eamonson. He thought he had given you one when he saw you in town, having written it out for that purpose; but certainly forgot it, as he did his great coat, which he has left at an inn upon the north road, besides having with the same noble contempt of wealth and self-interest, accepted half a moidore from an innkeeper, made of tin, and not worth a penny. I laugh at his carelessness, and so does he. Whether laughing at it be the way to cure it, time will show.

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I direct this to your office lest it should not find you at Taplow. My love to your family, and believe me ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR SEPHUS, Oct. 27, 1766.

If every dealer and chapman was connected with creditors like you, the poor commissioners of bankrupts would be ruined. I can only wonder at you, considering my knack at running in debt, and my slender ability to pay. After all, I am afraid that the poor stock must suffer. When I wrote my last, the payment of my boy's board was farther distant, therefore I suppose it was that I did not mention it. Mr. Peacock's bill too being a growing evil, though at that time I thought of paying it out of my pocket, must I find receive its satisfaction from another quarter. The former of these demands amounts to about six pounds, and the latter to about sixteen, and has waited so long for payment that in a little time my credit and interest in that gentleman will begin to totter. My finances will never be able to satisfy these craving necessities, without leaving my debt to you entirely unsatisfied. And though I know you are sincere in what you say, and as willing to wait for your money as heart can wish, yet *quære*, whether the next half year, which will bring its expenses with it, will be more propitious to you than the present? The succeeding half years may bear a close resemblance to their insolvent predecessors continually; and unless we break bank some

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time or other, your proposal of payment may be always what it is at present. What matters it, therefore, to reprieve the stock, which must come to execution at last?

I am heartily glad my uncle[1] has recovered his spirits; and desire you will remember me to all your associates at Taplow. I sympathise with you upon the fugitive nature of the longest vacation, and wish, for your sake, that the chancellor would pack up his great seal, and hold his court in your neighbourhood.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR SEPHUS, Nov. 12, 1766.

I DREW yesterday for Mr. Unwin's money, and when I have drawn about six pounds more for the young gentleman's maintenance whose birth and parentage you enquire after, I shall have drawn my last for the present.

He is the son of a drunken cobbler at St. Alban's, who would probably have starved him to death by this time, or have poisoned him with gin, if Providence had not thrown him in my way to rescue him. I was glad of an opportunity to show some mercy in a place where I had received so much; and hope God will give a blessing to my endeavours to preserve him. He is a fine boy, of a good temper and understanding; and if the notice that is taken of him by the neighbourhood

[1] Ashley Cowper, Esq.

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do not spoil him, will probably turn out well: for further particulars enquire of Dr. Cotton.

At present I have thoughts of dealing with him much after the same manner, when he is a year or two older, as with my present servant. He will be about nine years of age when my man leaves me; at which time I think of taking him into my service, for he will be old enough to do all the business for which I shall want him, and of a right age to be taught the trade and mystery of a breeches-maker. This, though not so cheap a way as keeping no servant, will yet be a considerable saving to me, for I shall have but one to maintain instead of two, and in the mean time an advantage will result from it, not to be overlooked, the securing him, I mean, from ill examples and bad company, which, if I turn him quite loose into another family, cannot be so easily done. But after all, my measures in this instance, and in all others, are precarious things, because my income is so. But God will order all for the best.

I am sorry my uncle's disorder still hangs about him. The grief of a wounded spirit is of all the most dreadful. Give my sincere love to your family and all my friends, and believe me, dear Joe,

Your's very affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, May 14, 1767.

I ONLY know that I was once the happy owner of a red-leather trunk, and that my brother, when I first saw him at Cambridge, upon my enquiring after my papers, &c., told me that in a red-leather trunk they were all safely deposited. The whole contents of it are little worth, and if I never see them more, I shall be but very moderately afflicted by the loss, though I fancy the trunk upon the road will prove to be the very trunk in question.

Together with your letter came a bill from my quondam hosier, in Fleet Street, Mr. Reynolds, for the sum of two pounds ten shillings, desiring present payment, cash being scarce. I sent him an order for the money by this day's post. My future expenses in the hosiery way will be small, for Mrs. Unwin knits all my stockings, and would knit my hats too, if that were possible.

I imagine my brother will be in town about midsummer, when he will be able to confer with you upon the subject of the inexorable Mr. E——, more to the purpose than I can by letter.

Having commenced gardener, I study the arts of pruning, sowing, and planting; and enterprise every thing in that way, from melons down to cabbages. I have a large garden to display my abilities in, and, were we twenty miles nearer London, I might turn higgler, and serve your honour with cauliflowers, and brocoli, at the best hand. I shall possibly now and then desire you to call at the seed-shop, in your way

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to Westminster, though sparingly. Should I do it often, you would begin to think you had a mother-in-law at Berkhampstead.

Yours, dear Joe,

W^M. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, June 16, 1767.

THIS part of the world is not productive of much news, unless the coldness of the weather be so, which is excessive for the season. We expect, or rather experience a warm contest between the candidates for the county: the preliminary movements of bribery, threatening, and drunkenness, being already taken. The Sandwich interest seems to shake, though both parties are very sanguine. Lord Carysfort is supposed to be in great jeopardy, though as yet, I imagine, a clear judgement cannot be formed; for a man may have all the noise on his side, and yet lose his election. You know me to be an uninterested person, and I am sure I am a very ignorant one in things of this kind. I only wish it was over, for it occasions the most detestable scene of profligacy and riot that can be imagined.

Yours ever,

W^M. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR JOE, Olney, Sept. 21, 1767.

I RETURN you thanks for your information in the law matter, and shall be obliged to you for further assurances when you can consult your authorities.

Many more thanks are due to you for the tender and friendly manner in which you bring me acquainted with the distress that attends my circumstances. I beg, my friend, that you will no longer make any objection to the sale of the hundred pounds. I cannot be easy till that is done; my peace of mind is concerned in it. Not because I suspect you of the least anxiety about payment, but because I abhor the thought of trespassing upon the goodness of a faithful friend. My brother has a letter of attorney already to empower him to receive the interest; but I believe it extends no further. Send me one therefore to empower you to sell the principal, and I shall be easy: as to any future exigencies I am entirely so. My expenses hereafter will be so much reduced in some capital articles, that I have not the least remaining doubt but that the income of my future years will be much more than sufficient for the demands of them. I might say something of this sort before, perhaps unadvisedly, and the event proves it to have been so; but now I say it upon good warrant, and cannot be mistaken.

I could wish, if it can be so managed, that the sale of the stock might be kept secret from my family, because it would probably alarm their fears upon my account, and possibly once more awaken their resentment. But the Lord's will be done, whatever it be.

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If they must know it, you will do me the kindness to assure them from me, that I have taken such order about my circumstances as that there can be no danger of exceeding them hereafter. Only I beg to be excused descending to particulars. Once more I entreat it as a favour, and shall consider it as a new proof of your attention to my happiness, that you will consent to the sale of the stock, and take measures for that purpose immediately. It cannot possibly be an inconvenience to me, nor can I possibly in any emergency whatever, make a better use of it.

My love to your mother and sisters.

Yours ever,

W^M. COWPER[1].

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Olney, Oct. 10, 1767.

I AM obliged to you for complying with my request, and shall be glad to have the matter expedited as fast as may be.

One more law question; and I believe the last,—A man holds lands in right of his wife, the rents payable half-yearly, viz. at Lady-day, and Michaelmas; dies in July. Are not the rising rents the property of

[1] On the back of this letter Lady Hesketh writes:—"This letter actually makes my heart bleed! Oh what must have been the sensations of such a heart as his while writing it! I don't know whether I could be *cruel* enough to wish Lord T. to see this and some others of this parcel. But surely he could not see *such* letters from *such* a friend without a degree of remorse that I could not wish to my greatest enemy."

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the widow? I mean, the rent of the whole last half-year. You are a better counsellor than I was, but I think you have much such a client in me, as I had in Dick Harcourt. Much good may do you with me!

Neither have I any map to consult, at present, but by what remembrance I have of the situation of this place in the last I saw, it lies at the northernmost point of the county. We are just five miles beyond Newport Pagnell. I am willing to suspect that you make this enquiry with a *view* to an *interview*, when time shall serve. We may possibly be settled in our own house in about a month, where so good a friend of mine will be extremely welcome to Mrs. Unwin. We shall have a bed, and a warm fire-side, at your service, if you can come before next summer; and if not, a parlour that looks the north wind full in the face, where you may be as cool as in the groves of Valombrosa.

Yours, my dear Sephus,
affectionately ever,
WM. COWPER.

P. S. The stock is in the three per cent. consols. You may send the letter of attorney by the waggon from the George in Smithfield. It sets out on Tuesday morning early. But upon recollection, it had better come by the post.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Olney, Nov. 10, 1767.

INCLOSED you have the letter of attorney. I shall be glad if you will find an opportunity of sending me six guineas, in a parcel by the Olney waggon, which sets out from the George in Smithfield early on Tuesday morning, therefore it must be sent to the inn on Monday night.

It seems to me, though it did not occur to me at first, that you may be drawn into circumstances disagreeable to your delicacy by being laid under the restraint of secrecy with respect to the sale of this money. I desire therefore that if any questions are asked about the manner in which my arrears to you have been discharged, you will declare it at once.

* * * * *

Yours sincerely,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR SEPHUS, Jan. 21, 1768.

THE notes arrived safe last night. We rejoice that the venison proved good. Pray send me word in your next whether Grainger the tailor is dead or alive. So much for the needful. You are always busy, and I am just going to be so, which will make brevity and conciseness convenient to us both.

Yours faithfully and truly,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, May 3, 1768.

I SHALL be obliged to you if you will send me a ten pound note by the first opportunity, and at the same time I shall be glad to be informed of the state of my finances. The last time I wrote I begged you would be so good as to tell me whether Grainger is to be found above ground or no; if he is, whether he lives where he did, or has changed his dwelling; and if not, where his executors, administrators or assigns, are to be met with. You will oblige me too, and so will your little tiney mother, if you will favour me with Mrs. Rebecca Cowper's receipt to pickle cabbage. My respects wait on her and your sisters, viz. your mother, not mine. You will ascribe my dryness and conciseness in the epistolary way to almost a total disuse of my pen. My youth and my scribbling vein are gone together, and unless they had been better employed it is fit they should.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Olney, May 7, 1768.

THANKS for the receipt and for the note. When you come this way next, I hope your business will not be so impatient. We can show you a beautiful country, though not much celebrated in song, and a fine long town, pretty clean in summer-time and full of poor

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folks. My love to Mrs. Doe, and thanks for the exercise of her transcribing abilities, not forgetting the rest of your household.

I shall want to draw for eighty pounds next month, and intend to leave the remainder by way of nest egg.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Oct. 20, 1768.

BY this time, I presume, you are returned to the precincts of the law. The latter end of October, I know, generally puts an end to your relaxations; such as reading upon sunshiny banks, and contemplating the clouds, as you lie upon your back.

Permit it to be one of the *aliena negotia centum*, which are now beginning to buzz in your ears, to send me a twenty pound note by the first opportunity. I beg my affectionate respects to my friends in Cook's Court, and am, dear Sephus,

Yours sincerely,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Olney, August 5, 1769.

THE note came safe.

My brother left us last Saturday, and is now I suppose refreshing his lungs with the pure air which blows

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upon the Welsh mountains; if indeed his lungs, which have been so long used to the fogs of Alma Mater, can be refreshed by the thin atmosphere of Snowdon or Plinlimmon.

I find that the vacancy I left at St. Alban's is filled up by a near relation. May the same Hand which struck off my fetters, deliver her also out of the House of Bondage; and may she say when she comes forth, what I hope to be able to say from my heart, while I have breath to utter it—It is good for me that I was afflicted.

Yours, my dear Joe, with my love to all who enquire after me,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOSEPH, Jan. 20, 1770.

THE newspapers informed me last week that the Society of the Middle Temple were come to a resolution that no more chambers should be sold with a power of assignment, and that this resolution would speedily become a law. If this be the case, it were better that mine were sold immediately, for it will never be worth my while to keep them till they shall want considerable repairs, which they must before many years are passed; and to sell them after this alteration takes place upon terms so much less valuable than those upon which I bought them, will be to lose half my money, unless the Inn is disposed to make up the difference.

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I have been in treaty with Col. Cowper about the sale of my Law Books, and I desired him to pay the purchase money into your hands. If it is done, shall be glad to receive it.

Yours, dear Joe, affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Olney, Feb. 10, 1770.

I WROTE to you above a fortnight since about my chambers, and desiring you, if I have any money in town to send it. The last post brought me word from Cambridge that my brother is very ill, and it may be absolutely necessary for me to go over to him next week. His disorder is supposed to be owing to an inward decay, the consequence of a violent hæmorrhage he had in the autumn. Nothing is so likely to prevent my journey at present, as the want of money to defray the expenses of it. I shall be glad of an immediate answer whether I have any money in your hands or not, that if I have none, I may furnish myself with it as I can.

Yours, dear Joe, with much affection,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOSEPH, Olney, Feb. 15, 1770.

I THANK you for the notes which I received yesterday, ten pounds, and fifteen pounds. If there should be the same deficiency next winter, I shall be obliged to

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you, if without waiting to hear further from me, you will be so good as to sell my chambers.

I had a letter yesterday from a friend of my brother's at Be'net. I do not find that there is any immediate occasion for my going over to Cambridge, especially as I have wrote to desire that my brother will come to Olney. He is not at present in a condition to undertake the journey; but Dr. Glynn approves of his coming, and will send him as soon as it shall be expedient. The account that I hear of him is, that he has a great shortness of breath, attended with a troublesome cough, and that within this week, his legs are very much swelled, but when his friend wrote he had had a good night, was pretty cheerful, and upon the whole, not worse than when he wrote before.

I should be glad if my Uncle Ashley would be so good as to get an answer from Col. Cowper with respect to the books, that if he does not choose to be the purchaser they may be sold to another, for I imagine time and cobwebs will not much increase their value.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Olney, April 21, 1770.

You will oblige me by enquiring at the Bank, the next time your business calls you that way, what stock my brother left, and by what means it is to be transferred to me; when the next dividend is payable, and whether it will be convenient for you to receive it for me by letter of attorney. You may be sure it will

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give me great pleasure to find myself now enabled to purchase such an annuity as may enable me to subsist comfortably without being any longer chargeable to my friends. You are the best judge of these matters, and I shall be glad of your advice. I know not what is in the Bank, but should hope there may be as much, as with the sale of my brother's effects at Cambridge, and my own chambers, may enable me to compass this very desirable point. I mention this in confidence.

Yours, dear Joe,
with my affectionate remembrances to Mrs. Hill and your sister,

Wm. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOSEPH, Jan. 1, 1771.

You will receive two parcels of venison, a haunch and a shoulder. The first was intended for you, the other comes to you by mistake. Some hours after the basket was sent to the waggon, we discovered that the shoulder had been packed up instead of the haunch. All imaginable endeavours were made to recover it, but without success, the waggon could not be unloaded again, and it was impossible otherwise to get at it. You may therefore thank a blundering servant for a venison pasty, which if she had minded her business better would have been eaten at Olney.

Yours, my dear friend,

Wm. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Olney, Jan. 30, 1772.

AN article in the last General Evening, compared with an advertisement in the same paper, has affected me with the deepest concern upon my Uncle Ashley's account. In the present uncertainty of my mind I am left to imagine the worst. It would have been kind in some of my many relations, if they had not left me to learn such melancholy intelligence from the public prints. I shall be obliged to you for such particulars as you can favour me with. They will at least serve to relieve me from the variety of restless conjectures which cannot but employ my mind on such an occasion.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 4, 1772.

I AM much indebted to you for your goodness in relieving me by the first opportunity from the fears I had upon my Uncle's account. The newspaper led me into the mistake, when the person was described as the Clerk of the House of Lords, without the addition of his proper distinction. But I feel much for Mrs. Cowper, and the poor young man, and love him better than he is aware of, though I have not seen him many years, and he was but a child when I saw him last. So sudden a stroke must fall very heavy upon her; but I know her principles to be such as will afford

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her support under the heaviest that can befall her. The dress, the circumstance of his having no baggage, and the time, all seem to concur in giving us a good hope that he was the person seen at Dover. You will make me happy by sending me the first intelligence you hear of him, for I could hardly be more interested in any case, not immediately my own, than I am in this. I am, with my best respects to Mrs. Hill, and thanks for her kindness.

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 7, 1772.

I AM very much obliged to you that in the hurry of so much business, you could yet find time to fulfil your promise, and send me the earliest intelligence of my poor cousin. But as Mrs. Cowper is so kind as to write to me herself upon the occasion, I will discharge you from any further trouble about it. We have seen the dark side of the dispensation, and I yet hope it has a bright one. This I know, that if he reap the same fruit of his sorrows, as thousands have found springing up from the deepest afflictions, he will rejoice in the remembrance of them, as I do, and shall do, while I live, in the recollection of mine.

Yours, my dear friend,

with my respects to Mrs. Hill and all your family,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 5, 1772.

You will certainly find the mistake on your side. When on the occasion of my brother's death, you was so good as to make enquiry for me at the Bank, you found seven hundred pounds there. Three hundred and fifty pounds were sold as you say to pay the College three hundred pounds, consequently three hundred and fifty remain. As you had forgot the principal doubtless you have not received the interest for the last two years, I would have it reserved, if you please, for payment of my tailor's bill. You say you expect farther remittances on my account, out of these you will be so good as to pay yourself. I thank you for the money you sent me by the post, but twenty pounds will not serve my present expenses. This is the season of the year when my wants are always most importunate. I shall be glad therefore if you will sell the odd fifty pounds, and remit me the money by the first opportunity.

Believe me, my dear friend, truly sensible of your invitation, though I do not accept it. My peace of mind is of so delicate a constitution, that the air of London will not agree with it. You have my prayers, the only return I can make you, for your many acts of still-continued friendship.

If you should smile, or even laugh at my conclusion, and I were near enough to see it, I should not be angry, though I should be grieved. It is not long since I should have laughed at such a recompense myself.

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But glory be to the name of Jesus, those days are past, and I trust never to return!

I am yours, and Mrs. Hill's,
with much sincerity,
WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 14, 1772.

I RECEIVED last night the two notes for thirty pounds, and ten pounds. I will not trouble you at present with my tailor's bill. I shall have occasion to employ him in the spring, by which time it is possible there may be enough in my bank to answer his demand, and you may expect to see him about March or April with a draft in his hand. I do not design to break into the stock, unless it should be unavoidably necessary. But you know well that I have been a considerable loser in point of income by my brother's death, and that the price of every thing is continually advancing, so that it is become much more difficult to bring the year about now, than when I first left St. Alban's. I am guilty of no extravagance, or inattention to what is called the main chance, nor would be on any account. My situation in life is comfortable; my friends would wish it to be so; nor is there a place in the kingdom where I should enjoy so many advantages as here. And yet, as I say, there may possibly arise a necessity of having recourse to the funds, though nothing less than necessity shall compel us to do it. In that case I should hope not

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to be censured, for the reasons above mentioned: and in the mean time shall do my best to prevent the necessity of such a measure.

Believe me, my dear friend,
affectionately yours,
WM. COWPER[1].

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOSEPH, Olney, May 18, 1776.

You have my thanks for the very fine mackerel you sent, and for your kind invitation to Wargrove, I am a little mortified to find that I had not got the start of your gardener as much as I hoped to have done; but let him be upon his guard, or I shall be too nimble for him another year.

I want money, not to lend, nor to give, but for my own personal and particular use; and want it so much, that I can't go on without it. You will oblige me if you will give yourself the trouble, to sell fifty pounds and remit me the produce immediately. I beg you will do this without making any sad reflections upon it; for assure yourself, neither you nor I shall ever have any reason to repent the doing it.

Yours affectionately,
W. C.

[1] There is a gap in the correspondence with Mr. Hill from the date of this letter to May 18, 1776.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 26, 1776.

MORE thanks for more mackerel, and many more for the fifty pounds, which I received yesterday. It gave me the greater pleasure, as it afforded a convincing proof that in your former refusal you was guided by nothing but an attention to my interest.

The winter having swallowed up the spring this year has thrown me so backward in some of my nicer productions, that I shall not be able to send you any melons till late in the season; but if you raise none yourself, they shall wait upon you as soon as they are ripe. Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 6, 1776.

As you have an extensive acquaintance, you may possibly be able to serve me in a design I have lately formed, of taking two, three, or four boys, under my tuition, to instruct them in the Greek and Latin languages. I should pursue, with some few exceptions, the Westminster method of instruction, being that which I am best acquainted with myself, and the best upon the whole that I have had an opportunity of observing. They would lodge and board under our roof, and be in all respects accommodated and attended in a manner that would well warrant the demand of an hundred guineas per annum.

You have often wished me an employment, and I

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know none but this for which I am qualified. If I can engage in it, it will probably be serviceable to me in more respects than one: but as it will afford me some sort of an establishment, at least for a time, it cannot but be desirable to one in my circumstances. If you are acquainted therefore with any person who has a son or sons between eight and ten years of age, for whom he would wish to find a tutor who will not make a property of them, nor neglect any means in his power to inform them thoroughly in what he undertakes to teach, you will oblige me by recommending *me*. Doubtless there are many such; and it is not an easy matter to find a family where the two grand points of education, literature and sobriety, would be more closely attended to than in This.

We return you many thanks for the fine turbot you was so kind as to send.

Believe me yours, &c.

W^m. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 1, 1776.

THE coldness of the past season would be forgotten in the heat of the present, if the effects of it were not still visible in the garden. My melons, which ought to have been eaten or at least eatable by this time, are not yet ripe; and as you are taking your repose at Wargrove, you will agree with me, I imagine, that it would hardly be worth while to trundle them so far. Else, as I flatter myself they will be better flavoured than such as are raised for sale, which are generally

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flashy, and indebted to the watering pot for their size, I should have been glad to have sent you half my crop.

If it were to rain pupils, perhaps I might catch a tub full; but till it does, the fruitlessness of my enquiries makes me think I must keep my Greek and Latin to myself. Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 12, 1776.

THE very agreeable contents of your last came safe to hand in the shape of two notes for thirty pounds. I am to thank you likewise for a barrel of very good oysters, received about a fortnight ago. One to whom fish is so welcome as it is to me, can have no great occasion to distinguish the sorts. In general, therefore, whatever fish are likely to think a jaunt into the country agreeable, will be sure to find me ready to receive them; butts, plaice, flounder, or any other. If herrings are yet to be had, as they cannot be bought at Olney till they are good for nothing, they will be welcome too. We have seen none this year, except a parcel that Mrs. Unwin sent for, and the fishmonger sent stale ones, a trick they are apt to play upon their customers at a distance.

Having suffered so much from nervous fevers myself, I know how to congratulate Ashley upon his recovery. Other distempers only batter the walls; but *they* creep silently into the citadel, and put the garrison to the sword.

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You perceive I have not made a squeamish use of your obliging offer. The remembrance of past years, and of the sentiments formerly exchanged in our evening walks, convinces me still that an unreserved acceptance of what is graciously offered is the handsomest way of dealing with one of your character.

Believe me yours,

WM. COWPER.

The Wellingborough Diligence passes our door every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and inns at the Cross Keys, St. John's Street, Smithfield.

As to the frequency, which you leave to my choice too, you have no need to exceed the number of your former remittances.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE, Dec. 10, 1776.

RECEIVED two notes for twenty-five pounds.

This day fortnight came two dozen herrings, remarkably fine. If you ordered any other fish to follow them, they swam another way.

Dr. Madan's preferment was in the paper, but I overlooked it, so I know neither the name, nor the value of it. But being a sinecure, and as we say, a very valuable one, it has every requisite to raise the spirits. Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOSEPH, Jan. 5, 1777.

I AM much obliged to you for a tub of very fine spiced salmon which arrived yesterday: it cost us some debate, and a wager into the bargain, one asserting it to be sturgeon, and the other what it proved to be. But the lady was in the right, as she should be upon all such occasions.

My respects wait upon your family. The cold is excessive; but I have a little greenhouse, which by the help of a little fire, is as blooming and as green as May. Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 30, 1777.

THOUGH you are by this time in Berkshire at least, if not in Warwickshire, I thought it would be best to acknowledge the receipt of the draft upon Child for twenty pounds, by the return of the post.

I sent you two brace of cucumbers by the Diligence on Friday, that is to say, critically at the time when they were sure to miss you: if yours are as forward, you have outstripped all our nobility and squires in this country. Neither the Duke of Bedford nor Lord Sussex have cut yet. But you must not be angry with your gardener, for we have more sunshine in two months at some seasons, than we have had this half-year. Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April—I fancy the 20th, 1777.

THANKS for a turbot, a lobster, and Captain Brydone; a gentleman who relates his travels so agreeably, that he deserves always to travel with an agreeable companion. I have been reading Gray's Works, and think him the only poet since Shakspeare entitled to the character of sublime. Perhaps you will remember that I once had a different opinion of him. I was prejudiced. He did not belong to our Thursday society, and was an Eton man, which lowered him prodigiously in our esteem. I once thought Swift's letters the best that could be written; but I like Gray's better. His humour, or his wit, or whatever it is to be called, is never ill-natured or offensive, and yet, I think equally poignant with the Dean's.

I am yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 25, 1777.

WE differ not much in our opinion of Mr. Gray. When I wrote last, I was in the middle of the book. His later Epistles, I think, are worth little, *as such*, but might be turned to excellent account by a young student of taste and judgement. As to Mr. West's Letters, I think I could easily bring your opinion of them to square with mine. They are elegant and sensible, but have nothing in them that is characteristic, or that discriminates them from the letters of any other

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young man of taste and learning. As to the book you mention, I am in doubt whether to read it or not. I should like the philosophical part of it, but the political, which, I suppose, is a detail of intrigues carried on by the Company and their servants, a history of rising and falling nabobs, I should have no appetite to at all. I will not, therefore, give you the trouble of sending it at present.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 13, 1777.

YOU need not give yourself any further trouble to procure me the South Sea Voyages. Lord Dartmouth, who was here about a month since, and was so kind as to pay me two visits, has furnished me with both Cook's and Forster's. 'Tis well for the poor natives of those distant countries that our national expenses cannot be supplied by cargoes of yams and bananas. Curiosity, therefore, being once satisfied, they may possibly be permitted for the future to enjoy their riches of that kind in peace.

If, when you are most at leisure, you can find out Baker upon the Microscope, or Vincent Bourne's Latin Poems, the last edition, and send them, I shall be obliged to you. Either, or both, if they can be easily found.

I am yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 23, 1777.

If a melon in the spring is a rarity, a melon in the beginning of winter perhaps may be so too, especially after so sharp a frost as we have lately had, and still more if it should happen to be a frost when you eat it. This and the fellow to it grew upon one joint. The vine was never watered since it was a seed. We ate part of one of them to-day, and thought it good; the other which is better ripened, we supposed might be even worthy of a place at your table, and have sent it accordingly.

I am obliged to you for three parcels of herrings. The melon is a crimson Cantalupe. Believe me,

Affectionately yours,

Wm. COWPER.

The basket contains, besides, Bourne's poems and Baker on the Microscope with thanks.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 28, 1777.

As Lord Dartmouth was so kind as to furnish me with Captain Cook's last tour round the globe, and with Mr. Forster's account of the same voyage, I am unwilling to be farther troublesome to him; and as I can venture to take a little liberty with you, which I could not handsomely take with his lordship, I will beg the favour of you, when you can do it conveniently,

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to send me either Commodore Byron's voyage round the world, or Captain Cook's *first* voyage, or both, if they are both to be had, which as the public curiosity is pretty well satisfied by this time, may possibly be the case. There was an account published by some of the people of the long boat, who parted from Captain Cook upon the coast of Patagonia. Their separation is all that is mentioned in Mr. Byron's first publication. If this can be procured I shall be glad of it. And pray do not scruple to tell me if I am too troublesome in pestering you with these commissions, for I had rather never see the books, than extort from you one single *Pish*. Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 11, 1777.

If I begin with thank you, I must end with it too, unless I manage it thus. I am obliged to you, and thank you for the books, for the fish, for the thirty pounds, which I hope I shall be able to negociate here; and Mrs. Hill, for the seeds she is so kind as to send me, is entitled to the same return. Besides which, when I return the books, I will enclose with them some seed of the plant called the Broallia, a new flower in this country. A few seeds were given me last year, which have produced a quantity. Gordon I am told sells it two guineas an ounce. We account it the most elegant flower we have seen, and when Lord Dartmouth was here, he did it the honour to think with

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us. I will send with it directions for the management of it.

I am, with compliments to Mrs. Hill,
Yours affectionately,
W^M. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 1, 1778.

YOUR last packet was doubly welcome, and Mrs. Hill's kindness gives me peculiar pleasure, not as coming from a stranger to me, for I do not account her so, though I never saw her, but as coming from one so nearly connected with yourself. I shall take care to acknowledge the receipt of her obliging letter, when I return the books. Assure yourself, in the mean time, that I read as if the librarian was at my elbow, continually jogging it, and growling out, Make haste. But as I read aloud, I shall not have finished before the end of the week, and will return them by the diligence next Monday.

I shall be glad if you will let me know whether I am to understand by the sorrow you express, that any part of my former supplies is actually cut off, or whether they are only more tardy in coming in than usual. It is useful even to the rich, to know, as nearly as may be, the exact amount of their income; but how much more so to a man of my small dimensions. If the former should be the case, I shall have less reason to be surprised, than I have to wonder at the continuance of them so long. Favours are favours indeed, when laid out upon so barren a soil, where the expense

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of sowing is never accompanied by the smallest hope of return. What pain there is in gratitude, I have often felt; but the pleasure of requiting an obligation, has always been out of my reach.

Affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 11, 1778.

Poor Sir Thomas! I knew that I had a place in his affections, and from his own information, many years ago, a place in his will; but little thought that after the lapse of so many years I should still retain it. His remembrance of me, after so long a season of separation, has done me much honour, and leaves me the more reason to regret his decease.

I am reading the Abbé with great satisfaction, and think him the most intelligent writer upon so extensive a subject I ever met with; in every respect superior to the Abbé in Scotland.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

P. S. Many thanks for the intended fish.

Sunday morning.

Which is just come, and should have been here last night. I shall bumble my landlady at Newport.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 7, 1778.

I HAVE been in continual fear lest every post should bring a summons for the Abbé Raynal; and am glad that I have finished him before my fears were realized. I have kept him long, but not through neglect or idleness. I read the five volumes to Mrs. Unwin; and my voice will seldom serve me with more than an hour's reading at a time. I am indebted to him for much information upon subjects, which, however interesting, are so remote from those with which country folks in general are conversant, that had not his works reached me at Olney, I should have been for ever ignorant of them.

I admire him as a philosopher, as a writer, as a man of extraordinary intelligence, and no less extraordinary abilities to digest it. He is a true patriot. But then the world is his country. The frauds and tricks of the cabinet, and the counter, seem to be equally objects of his aversion. And if he had not found that religion too had undergone a mixture of artifice, in its turn, perhaps he would have been a Christian.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 18, 1778.

I TRULY rejoice that the chancellor has made you such a present, that he has given such an additional lustre to it by his manner of conferring it, and that all

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this happened before you went to Wargrove, because it made your retirement there the more agreeable. This is just according to the character of the man. He will give grudgingly, in answer to solicitation, but delights in surprising those he esteems, with his bounty. May you live to receive still further proofs that I am not mistaken in my opinion of him.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 11, 1779.

WHEN you favoured me with the last remittance of twenty pounds, you was so kind as to say I might draw for more, if I had occasion for it. The occasion is now come, and I shall be obliged to you for a further advance. I know I am in your debt, which sits the easier upon me, because I am almost always so. Long habit and custom are able to familiarize to us things much more disagreeable than this. A debt of this kind, I am, at present at least able to discharge. But I owe you upon other accounts what I can never pay, except by continuing

Affectionately and truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 2, 1779.

You begin to count the remaining days of the vacation, not with impatience, but through unwillingness to see the end of it. For the mind of man, at least of most men, is equally busy in anticipating the evil and the good. That word *anticipation* puts me in remembrance of the pamphlet of that name, which, if you purchased, I should be glad to borrow. I have seen only an extract from it in the Review, which made me laugh heartily, and wish to peruse the whole.

The newspaper informs me of the arrival of the Jamaica fleet. I hope it imports some pine-apple plants for me. I have a good frame and a good bed prepared to receive them. I send you annexed a fable, in which the pine-apple makes a figure, and shall be glad if you like the taste of it. Two pair of soles, with shrimps, which arrived last night, demand my acknowledgements. You have heard that when Arion performed upon the harp, the fish followed him. I really have no design to fiddle you out of more fish, but if you should esteem my verses worthy of such a price, though I shall never be so renowned as he was, I shall think myself equally indebted to the muse that helps me.

My affectionate respects attend Mrs. Hill. She has put Mr. Wright to the expense of building a new hot-house: the plants produced by the seeds she gave me, having grown so large as to require an apartment by themselves. Yours,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 14, 1779.

YOUR approbation of my last Heliconian present encourages me to send you another. I wrote it, indeed, on purpose for you; for my subjects are not always such as I could hope would prove agreeable to you. My mind has always a melancholy cast, and is like some pools I have seen, which, though filled with a black and putrid water, will nevertheless, in a bright day, reflect the sun-beams from their surface.

" On the Promotion of Edward Thurlow," &c.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. NEWTON.

DEAR MADAM, March 4, 1780.

To communicate surprise is almost, perhaps quite, as agreeable as to receive it. This is my present motive for writing to you rather than to Mr. Newton. He would be pleased with hearing from me, but he would not be surprised at it; you see, therefore, I am selfish upon the present occasion, and principally consult my own gratification. Indeed, if I consulted yours, I should be silent, for I have no such budget as the minister's, furnished and stuffed with ways and means for every emergency, and shall find it difficult, perhaps, to raise supplies even for a short epistle.

You have observed in common conversation, that the man who coughs and blows his nose the oftenest,

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(I mean if he has not a cold,) does it because he has nothing to say. Even so it is in letter-writing: a long preface, such as mine, is an ugly symptom, and always forebodes great sterility in the following pages.

The vicarage-house became a melancholy object, as soon as Mr. Newton had left it; when you left it, it became more melancholy: now it is actually occupied by another family, even I cannot look at it without being shocked. As I walked in the garden this evening, I saw the smoke issue from the study chimney, and said to myself, that used to be a sign that Mr. Newton was there; but it is so no longer. The walls of the house know nothing of the change that has taken place; the bolt of the chamber-door sounds just as it used to do; and when Mr. Page goes upstairs, for aught I know, or ever shall know, the fall of his foot could hardly, perhaps, be distinguished from that of Mr. Newton. But Mr. Newton's foot will never be heard upon that staircase again. These reflections, and such as these, occurred to me upon the occasion, and though in many respects I have no more sensibility left than there is in brick and mortar, yet I am not permitted to be quite unfeeling upon this subject. If I were in a condition to leave Olney too, I certainly would not stay in it. It is no attachment to the place that binds me here, but an unfitness for every other. I lived in it once, but now I am buried in it, and have no business with the world on the outside of my sepulchre; my appearance would startle them, and theirs would be shocking to me.

Such are my thoughts about the matter. Others are more deeply affected, and by more weighty consi-

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derations, having been many years the objects of a ministry which they had reason to account themselves happy in the possession of; they fear they shall find themselves great sufferers by the alteration that has taken place; they would have had reason to fear it in any case. But Mr. Newton's successor does not bring with him the happiest presages, so that in the present state of things they have double reason for their fears. Though I can never be the better for Mr. Page, Mr. Page shall never be the worse for me. If his conduct should even justify the worst apprehensions that have been formed of his character, it is no personal concern of mine. But this I can venture to say, that if he is not spotless, his spots will be seen, and the plainer, because he comes after Mr. Newton.

We were concerned at your account of Robert, and have little doubt but he will shuffle himself out of his place. Where he will find another, is a question not to be resolved by those who recommended him to this. I wrote him a long letter, a day or two after the receipt of yours, but I am afraid it was only clapping a blister upon the crown of a wig-block.

My respects attend Mr. Newton and yourself, accompanied with much affection for you both.

Yours, dear Madam,

W. C.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 16, 1780.

If I had had the horns of a snail, I should have drawn them in the moment I saw the reason of your epistolary brevity, because I felt it too. May your seven reams be multiplied into fourteen, till your letters become truly Lacedæmonian, and are reduced to a single syllable. Though I shall be a sufferer by the effect, I shall rejoice in the cause. You are naturally formed for business, and such a head as yours can never have too much of it. Though my predictions have been fulfilled in two instances, I do not plume myself much upon my sagacity; because it required but little to foresee that Thurlow would be chancellor, and that you would have a crowded office. As to the rest of my connexions, there, too, I have given proof of equal foresight, with not a jot more reason for vanity. Any body might see that they were too much like myself to be good for any thing; disqualified by temper, and unfurnished with abilities to be useful either to themselves or others.

To use the phrase of all who ever wrote upon the state of Europe, the political horizon is dark indeed. The cloud has been thickening, and the thunder advancing many years. The storm now seems to be vertical, and threatens to burst upon the land, as if, with the next clap, it would shake all to pieces. I did not know, (for I know nothing but what I learn from the General Evening,) that there was a deliberate purpose on the part of government, to set up the throne of despotism. If that is the case, no doubt but the

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standard of opposition will flame against it, till it has consumed to ashes the devisers of a project that in this country is sure to terminate in the ruin of those that form it. Alas, of what use is history, and why should kings be taught to read, if they read to so little purpose? As for me, I am no Quaker, except where military matters are in question, and there I am much of the same mind with an honest man, who, when he was forced into the service, declared he would not fight, and gave this reason—because he saw nothing worth fighting for. You will say, perhaps, Is not liberty worth a struggle? True: but will success insure it to me? Might I not, like the Americans, emancipate myself from one master, only to serve a score, and, with laurels upon my brow, sigh for my former chains again?

Many thanks for your kind invitation. Ditto to Mrs. Hill, for the seeds—unexpected, and therefore the more welcome. I have not a leg that is not tied to Olney; and if they were all at liberty, not one of them all would hop to London. The thought of it distresses me; the sight of it would craze me.

You gave me great pleasure, by what you say of my uncle. His motto shall be

Hic ver perpetuum atque alienis mensibus æstas.

I remember the time when I have been kept waking, by the fear that he would die before me; but now, I think, I shall grow old first.

Yours, my dear friend, affectionately,

W. C.

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TO MRS. NEWTON.

DEAR MADAM, June, 1780.

WHEN I write to Mr. Newton, he answers me by letter; when I write to you, you answer me in fish. I return you many thanks for the mackerel and lobster. They assured me in terms as intelligible as pen and ink could have spoken, that you still remember *Orchard-side;* and though they never spoke in their lives, and it was still less to be expected from them that they should speak, being dead, they gave us an assurance of your affection that corresponds exactly with that which Mr. Newton expresses towards us in all his letters.—For my own part, I never in my life began a letter more at a venture than the present. It is possible that I may finish it, but perhaps more than probable that I shall not. I have had several indifferent nights, and the wind is easterly; two circumstances so unfavourable to me in all my occupations, but especially that of writing, that it was with the greatest difficulty I could even bring myself to attempt it.

You have never yet perhaps been made acquainted with the unfortunate Tom Freeman's misadventure. He and his wife returning from Hanslip fair, were coming down Weston Lane; to wit, themselves, their horse, and their great wooden panniers, at ten o'clock at night. The horse having a lively imagination, and very weak nerves, fancied he either saw or heard something, but has never been able to say what. A sudden fright will impart activity, and a momentary vigour, even to lameness itself. Accordingly, he started, and sprung from the middle of the road to

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the side of it, with such surprising alacrity, that he dismounted the gingerbread baker and his gingerbread wife in a moment. Not contented with this effort, nor thinking himself yet out of danger, he proceeded as fast as he could to a full gallop, rushed against the gate at the bottom of the lane, and opened it for himself, without perceiving that there was any gate there. Still he galloped, and with a velocity and momentum continually increasing, till he arrived in Olney. I had been in bed about ten minutes, when I heard the most uncommon and unaccountable noise that can be imagined. It was, in fact, occasioned by the clattering of tin pattypans and a Dutch-oven against the sides of the panniers. Much gingerbread was picked up in the street, and Mr. Lucy's windows were broken all to pieces. Had this been all, it would have been a comedy, but we learned the next morning, that the poor woman's collar-bone was broken, and she has hardly been able to resume her occupation since.

What is added on the other side, if I could have persuaded myself to write sooner, would have reached you sooner; 'tis about ten days old. * * * * *

"The Doves[1]."

The male Dove was smoking a pipe, and the female Dove was sewing, while she delivered herself as above. This little circumstance may lead you perhaps to guess what pair I had in my eye.

Yours, dear Madam,

WM. COWPER.

[1] Vol. x. p. 310.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MON AMI, July 8, 1780.

By this time, I suppose, you have ventured to take your fingers out of your ears, being delivered from the deafening shouts of the most zealous mob that ever strained their lungs in the cause of religion. I congratulate you upon a gentle relapse into the customary sounds of a great city, which, though we rustics abhor them, as noisy and dissonant, are a musical and sweet murmur, compared with what you have lately heard. The tinkling of a kennel may be distinguished now, where the roaring of a cascade would have been sunk and lost. I never suspected, till the newspapers informed me of it, a few days since, that the barbarous uproar had reached Great Queen Street. I hope Mrs. Hill was in the country, and shall rejoice to hear that, as I am sure you did not take up the protestant cudgels upon this hair-brained occasion, so you have not been pulled in pieces as a papist.

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 12, 1780.

Such nights as I frequently spend, are but a miserable prelude to the succeeding day, and indispose me, above all things, to the business of writing. Yet with a pen in my hand, if I am able to write at all, I find myself gradually relieved; and as I am glad of any employment that may serve to engage my attention,

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so especially I am pleased with an opportunity of conversing with you, though it be but upon paper. This occupation above all others assists me in that self-deception to which I am indebted for all the little comfort I enjoy; things seem to be as they were, and I almost forget that they never can be so again.

We are both obliged to you for a sight of Mr. ——'s letter. The friendly and obliging manner of it will much enhance the difficulty of answering it. I think I can see plainly that though he does not hope for your applause, he would gladly escape your censure. He seems to approach you smoothly and softly, and to take you gently by the hand, as if he bespoke your lenity, and entreated you at least to spare him. You have such skill in the management of your pen, that I doubt not you will be able to send him a balmy reproof that shall give him no reason to complain of a broken head.—How delusive is the wildest speculation when pursued with eagerness, and nourished with such arguments as the perverted ingenuity of such a mind as his can easily furnish!—Judgement falls asleep upon the bench, while Imagination, like a smug, pert counsellor, stands chattering at the bar, and with a deal of fine-spun, enchanting sophistry, carries all before him.

If I had strength of mind, I have not strength of body for the task which, you say, some would impose upon me. I cannot bear much thinking. The meshes of that fine network, the brain, are composed of such mere spinners' threads in me, that when a long thought finds its way into them, it buzzes, and twangs, and bustles about at such a rate as seems to threaten the

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whole contexture.—No—I must needs refer it again to you.

My enigma will probably find you out, and you will find out my enigma at some future time. I am not in a humour to transcribe it now. Indeed I wonder that a sportive thought should ever knock at the door of my intellects, and still more that it should gain admittance. It is as if harlequin should intrude himself into the gloomy chamber where a corpse is deposited in state. His antic gesticulations would be unseasonable at any rate, but more especially so if they should distort the features of the mournful attendants into laughter. But the mind long wearied with the sameness of a dull, dreary prospect, will gladly fix its eyes on any thing that may make a little variety in its contemplations, though it were but a kitten playing with her tail.

You would believe, though I did not say it at the end of every letter, that we remember you and Mrs. Newton with the same affection as ever; but I would not therefore excuse myself from writing what it gives you pleasure to read. I have often wished indeed, when writing to an ordinary correspondent, for the revival of the Roman custom—*salutem* at top, and *vale* at bottom. But as the French have taught all Europe to enter a room and to leave it with a most ceremonious bow, so they have taught us to begin and conclude our letters in the same manner. However I can say to you,

Sans ceremonie,

Adieu, *mon ami!*

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR, Aug. 10, 1780.

I GREET you at your castle of Buen Retiro, and wish you could enjoy the unmixt pleasures of the country there. But it seems you are obliged to dash the cup with a portion of those bitters you are always swallowing in town. Well—you are honourably and usefully employed, and ten times more beneficially to society, than if you were piping to a few sheep under a spreading beech, or listening to a tinkling rill. Besides, by the effect of long custom and habitual practice, you are not only enabled to endure your occupation, but even find it agreeable. I remember the time when it would not have suited you so well, to have devoted so large a part of your vacation to the objects of your profession; and you, I dare say, have not forgot what a seasonable relaxation you found, when, lying at full stretch upon the ruins of an old wall, by the sea-side, you amused yourself with Tasso's Jerusalem, and the Pastor Fido. I recollect that we both pitied Mr. De Grey, when we called at his cottage at Taplow, and found, not the master indeed, but his desk, with his white-leaved folio upon it, which bespoke him as much a man of business in his retirement as in Westminster Hall. But by these steps he ascended the Bench. Now he may read what he pleases, and ride where he will, if the gout will give him leave. And you who have no gout, and probably never will, when your hour of dismission comes, will,

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for that reason, if for no other, be a happier man than he. I am, my dear friend,

affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

P. S. Mr. —— has not thought proper to favour me with his book, and having no interest in the subject, I have not thought proper to purchase it. Indeed I have no curiosity to read what I am sure must be erroneous before I read it. Truth is worth every thing that can be given for it; but a mere display of ingenuity, calculated only to mislead, is worth nothing.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 10, 1780.

I AM sorry that the bookseller shuffles off the trouble of package upon any body that belongs to you. I think I could cast him upon this point, in an action upon the case, grounded upon the terms of his own undertaking. He engages to serve country customers. Ergo, as it would be unreasonable to expect that when a country gentleman wants a book, he should order his chaise, and bid the man drive to Exeter Change; and as it is not probable that the book would find the way to him, of itself, though it were the wisest that ever was written, I should suppose the law would compel him. For I recollect it is a maxim of good authority in the courts, that there is no right without a remedy. And if another, or a third person, should not be suffered to

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interpose between my right and the remedy the law gives me, where the right is invaded, much less, I apprehend, shall the man himself, who of his own mere motion gives me that right, be suffered to do it.

I never made so long an argument upon a law case before. I ask your pardon for doing it now. You have but little need of such entertainment.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Dec. 21, 1780.

I THANK you for your anecdote of Judge Carpenter. If it really happened, it is one of the best stories I ever heard; and if not, it has at least the merit of being *ben trovato*. We both very sincerely laughed at it, and think the whole Livery of London must have done the same; though I have known some persons whose faces, as if they had been cast in a mould, could never be provoked to the least alteration of a single feature; so that you might as well relate a good story to a barber's block.

Non equidem invideo, miror magis.

Your sentiments with respect to me are exactly Mrs. Unwin's. She, like you, is perfectly sure of my deliverance, and often tells me so. I make but one answer, and sometimes none at all. That answer gives *her* no pleasure, and would give *you* as little; therefore at this time I suppress it. It is better on every account that they who interest themselves so

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deeply in that event, should believe the certainty of it, than that they should not. It is a comfort to *them* at least, if it is none to me; and as I could not, if I would, so neither would I, if I could, deprive them of it.

I annex a long thought in verse for your perusal. It was produced about last midsummer, but I never could prevail with myself, till now, to transcribe it. You have bestowed some commendations on a certain poem now in the press, and they, I suppose, have at least animated me to the task. If human nature may be compared to a piece of tapestry, (and why not?) then human nature, as it subsists in me, though it is sadly faded on the right side, retains all its colour on the wrong. I am pleased with commendation, and though not passionately desirous of indiscriminate praise, or what is generally called popularity, yet when a judicious friend claps me on the back, I own I find it an encouragement. At this season of the year, and in this gloomy uncomfortable climate, it is no easy matter for the owner of a mind like mine, to divert it from sad subjects, and fix it upon such as may administer to its amusement. Poetry, above all things, is useful to me in this respect. While I am held in pursuit of pretty images, or a pretty way of expressing them, I forget every thing that is irksome, and, like a boy that plays truant, determine to avail myself of the present opportunity to be amused, and to put by the disagreeable recollection that I must, after all, go home and be whipt again.

It will not be long, perhaps, before you will receive a poem called the *Progress of Error*. That will be succeeded by another, in due time, called *Truth*.

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Don't be alarmed. I ride Pegasus with a curb. He will never run away with me again. I have even convinced Mrs. Unwin that I can manage him, and make him stop when I please.

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Probably Nov. or Dec. 1780.

I THANK you much for your letter, which, without obliging me to travel to Wargrove at a time of year when journeying is not very agreeable, has introduced me in the most commodious manner to a perfect acquaintance with your neat little garden, your old cottage, and above all with your most prudent and sagacious landlady. As much as I admire her, I admire much more the philosophical temper with which you seem to treat her: for I know few characters more provoking, to me at least, than the selfish, who are never honest; especially if while they determine to pick your pocket, they have not ingenuity enough to conceal their purpose. But you are perfectly in the right, and act just as I would endeavour to do on the same occasion. You sacrifice every thing to a retreat you admire; and, if the natural indolence of my disposition did not forsake me, so would I.

You might as well apologize for sending me forty pounds as for writing about yourself. Of the two ingredients I hardly know which made your letter the most agreeable — (observe, I do not say the most acceptable.) The draft indeed was welcome; but

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though it was so, yet it did not make me laugh. I laughed heartily at the account you gave of yourself and your landlady, Dame Saveall, whose picture you have drawn, though not with a flattering hand, yet I dare say with a strong resemblance. As to you, I have never seen so much of you, since I was in London, where you and I so often have made ourselves merry with each other's humour, yet never gave each other a moment's pain by doing so. We are both humourists, and it is well for your wife and my Mrs. Unwin, that they have alike found out the way to deal with us.

More thanks to Mrs. Hill for her intentions. She has the true enthusiasm of a gardener, and therefore I can pity her under her disappointment, having so large a share of that commodity myself.

I am informed that Lady C. has left me an annuity of twenty pounds. I mention it merely because, as you do not, I thought you might not have heard it.

Yours, my dear Sir, affectionately,

W^m^. COWPER.

Dec. 10, 1780.

It is well for me that as my intelligencer with respect to Lady Cowper's legacy proved to be mistaken; the substantial part of his information is however authenticated and the money not lost, though it comes from a different mine.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR SIR, Jan. 21, 1781.

I AM glad that the *Progress of Error* did not Err in its Progress, as I feared it had; and that it has reached you safe; and still more pleased that it has met with your approbation; for if it had not, I should have wished it had miscarried, and have been sorry that the bearer's memory had served him so well upon the occasion. I knew him to be that sort of genius, which, being much busied in making excursions of the imaginary kind, is not always present to its own immediate concerns, much less to those of others; and having reposed the trust in him, began to regret that I had done so, when it was too late. But I did it to save a frank, and as the affair has turned out, that end was very well answered. This is committed to the hands of a less volatile person, and therefore more to be depended on.

As to the poem called *Truth*, which is already longer than its elder brother, and is yet to be lengthened by the addition of perhaps twenty lines, perhaps more; I shrink from the thought of transcribing it at present. But as there is no need to be in any hurry about it, I hope that in some rainy season, which the next month will probably bring with it, when perhaps I may be glad of employment, the undertaking will appear less formidable.

You need not withhold from us any intelligence relating to yourselves, upon an apprehension that Mr. Raban has been beforehand with you upon those sub-

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jects, for he came down as costive as if you had fed him with nothing but quinces, and unless we engineered him with question after question, we could get nothing out of him. I have known such travellers in my time, and Mrs. Newton is no stranger to one of them, who keep all their observations and discoveries to themselves, till they are extorted from them by mere dint of examination, and cross-examination. He told us indeed that some invisible agent supplied you every Sunday with a coach, which we were pleased with hearing; and this, I think, was the sum total of his information.

We are much concerned for Mr. Barham's loss; but it is well for that gentleman, that those amiable features in his character, which most incline one to sympathise with him, are the very graces and virtues that will strengthen him to bear it with equanimity and patience. People that have neither his light nor experience, will wonder that a disaster which would perhaps have broken their hearts, is not heavy enough to make any abatement in the cheerfulness of his.

Your books came yesterday. I shall not repeat to you what I said to Mrs. Unwin, after having read two or three of the letters. I admire the preface, in which you have given an air of novelty to a worn-out topic, and have actually engaged the favour of the reader by saying those things in a delicate and uncommon way, which in general are disgusting.

I suppose you know that Mr. Scott will be in town on Tuesday. He is likely to take possession of the Vicarage at last, with the best grace possible; at least,

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if he and Mr. Browne can agree upon the terms. The old gentleman I find would be glad to let the house, and abridge the stipend; in other words to make a good bargain for himself, and starve his curate.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 15, 1781.

It is possible that Mrs. Hill may not be herself a sufferer by the late terrible catastrophe in the Islands; but I should suppose by her correspondence with those parts, she may be connected with some that are. In either case, I condole with her; for it is reasonable to imagine that since the first tour that Columbus made into the Western world, it never before experienced such a convulsion; perhaps never since the foundation of the globe. You say the state grows old, and discovers many symptoms of decline. A writer, possessed of a genius for hypothesis, like that of Burnet, might construct a plausible argument to prove that the world itself is in a state of superannuation, if there be such a word. If not, there must be such a one as superannuity. When that just equilibrium that has hitherto supported all things, seems to fail, when the elements burst the chain that has bound them, the wind sweeping away the works of man, and man himself together with his works, and the ocean seeming to overleap the command, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," these irregular and prodigious vagaries seem to bespeak a

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decay, and forebode, perhaps, not a very distant dissolution. This thought has so run away with my attention, that I have left myself no room for the little politics that have only Great Britain for their object. Who knows but that while a thousand, and ten thousand tongues are employed in adjusting the scale of our national concerns, in complaining of new taxes, and funds loaded with a debt of accumulating millions, the consummation of all things may discharge it in a moment, and the scene of all this bustle disappear, as if it had never been? Charles Fox would say, perhaps, he thought it very unlikely. I question if he could prove even that. I am sure, however, he could not prove it to be impossible. Yours,

W^m^. COWPER.

TO MRS. HILL.

DEAR MADAM, Feb. 19, 1781.

WHEN a man, especially a man that lives altogether in the country, undertakes to write to a lady he never saw, he is the awkwardest creature in the world. He begins his letter under the same sensations he would have, if he was to accost her in person, only with this difference,—that he may take as much time as he pleases, for consideration, and need not write a single word that he has not well weighed and pondered beforehand, much less a sentence that he does not think supereminently clever. In every other respect, whether he be engaged in an interview, or in a letter, his behaviour is, for the most part, equally constrained and unnatural. He resolves, as they say, to set the best

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leg foremost, which often proves to be what Hudibras calls—

> ——————Not that of bone,
> But much its better—th' wooden one.

His extraordinary effort only serves, as in the case of that hero, to throw him on the other side of his horse; and he owes his want of success, if not to absolute stupidity, to his most earnest endeavour to secure it.

Now I do assure you, Madam, that all these sprightly effusions of mine stand entirely clear of the charge of premeditation, and that I never entered upon a business of this kind with more simplicity in my life. I determined, before I began, to lay aside all attempts of the kind I have just mentioned; and being perfectly free from the fetters that self-conceit, commonly called bashfulness, fastens upon the mind, am, as you see, surprisingly brilliant.

My principal design is to thank you in the plainest terms, which always afford the best proof of a man's sincerity, for your obliging present. The seeds will make a figure hereafter in the stove of a much greater man than myself, who am a little man, with no stove at all. Some of them, however, I shall raise for my own amusement, and keep them, as long as they can be kept, in a bark heat, which I give them all the year; and in exchange for those I part with, I shall receive such exotics as are not too delicate for a greenhouse.

I will not omit to tell you, what, no doubt, you have heard already, though, perhaps, you have never made the experiment, that leaves gathered at the fall are

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found to hold their heat much longer than bark, and are preferable in every respect. Next year I intend to use them myself. I mention it because Mr. Hill told me, some time since, that he was building a stove, in which, I suppose, they will succeed much better than in a frame.

I beg to thank you again, Madam, for the very fine salmon you was so kind as to favour me with, which has all the sweetness of a Hertfordshire trout, and resembles it so much in flavour, that, blindfold, I should not have known the difference.

I beg, Madam, you will accept all these thanks, and believe them as sincere as they really are. Mr. Hill knows me well enough to be able to vouch for me, that I am not over-much addicted to compliments and fine speeches; nor do I mean either the one or the other, when I assure you that I am, dear Madam, not merely for his sake, but your own,

Your most obedient
and affectionate servant,
W^M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 25, 1781.

He that tells a long story should take care that it be not made a long story by his manner of telling it. His expression should be natural, and his method clear; the incidents should be interrupted by very few reflections, and parentheses should be entirely discarded. I do not know that poor Mr. Teedon guides himself in the affair of story-telling by any one

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of these rules, or by any rule indeed that I ever heard of. He has just left us, after a long visit, the greatest part of which he spent in the narration of a certain detail of facts that might have been compressed into a much smaller compass, and my attention to which has wearied and worn out all my spirits. You know how scrupulously nice he is in the choice of his expression; an exactness that soon becomes very inconvenient both to speaker and hearer, where there is not a great variety to chuse out of. But Saturday evening is come, the time I generally devote to my correspondence with you; and Mrs. Unwin will not allow me to let it pass without writing, though, having done it herself, both she and you might well spare me upon the present occasion.

I have not yet read your extract from Mr. Scott's letter to Mr. Raban, though I have had an opportunity to do it. I thought it might be better to wait a little, in hope that there might be no need to do it at all. If hereafter it should be necessary to inform him of Mr. Scott's feelings and sentiments upon the subject, I will readily perform the office, and accompany the performance of it with such advice of my own, and such reasons as may happen to occur. In the mean time, I am a little apprehensive that opposition may provoke opposition in return, and set a sharper edge upon inclination, already sufficiently whetted to the business.

We are not the proper persons to give counsel or direction to Mr. Scott; our acquaintance with him is of too short a standing to warrant us in the use of such a liberty. But it is our joint opinion that he will

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not find himself easily and comfortably settled at Olney while he retains the curacy at Weston. The people of that parish are rather inclined to grumble; and, as we are informed, express some dissatisfaction on finding that they are to have but single service on the Sabbath; and the people here are not well pleased, though they will have the same number of ordinances as before, that they are not to have them at the same time. Some, perhaps, may find the alteration a real inconvenience; and others, who may not find it so, will be glad of an occasion to pretend one. His resignation of Weston would at once annihilate all these complaints, and would, besides, place the Sunday evening meeting and the whole management of it entirely in his own hands, which, as it would prevent the possibility of any bickerings on the account of supernumerary speakers, we should think were a most desirable object. We are well aware that the vicinity of Weston to Ra'nstone is Mr. Scott's reason for still continuing to hold the former; but whether, when weighed in the balance against the mischiefs he may incur by doing it, it will be found a sufficient one, may be a matter deserving consideration. It can be no very difficult thing for his former people to reach him at Olney, though one mile will be added to their journey. If they really prefer him to their new minister, we think such a difficulty as that may be easily surmounted. Whether Mr. Scott's circumstances will afford the sacrifice, we do not know; but Mrs. Unwin thinks, and, if you ask me my opinion, I think so too, that if there be no other objection to the measure, he would do well to commit himself to Providence for a

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supply. Mr. Browne's age, and the probability, nearly related, I suppose, to a certainty, that Mr. Scott will succeed him in the living, seems, of itself, to reduce that difficulty almost to nothing. My paper is so intolerably bad, as you may perceive by the running of the ink, that it has quite worn out my patience.

Notwithstanding my purpose to shake hands with the Muse, and take my leave of her for the present, we have already had a *tête-à-tête*, since I sent you the last production. I am as much, or rather more pleased with my new plan, than with any of the foregoing. I mean to give a short summary of the Jewish story, the miraculous interpositions in behalf of that people, their great privileges, their abuse of them, and their consequent destruction; and then by way of comparison, such another display of the favours vouchsafed to this country, the similar ingratitude with which they have requited them, and the punishment they have therefore reason to expect, unless reformation interpose to prevent it. *Expostulation* is its present title; but I have not yet found in the writing it, that facility and readiness without which I shall despair to finish it well, or indeed to finish it at all.

Believe me, my dear Sir, with love to Mrs. N.

Your ever affectionate,

WM. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 5, 1781.

SINCE writing is become one of my principal amusements, and I have already produced so many verses on subjects that entitle them to a hope that they may possibly be useful, I should be sorry to suppress them entirely, or to publish them to no purpose, for want of that cheap ingredient, the name of the author. If my name therefore will serve them in any degree, as a passport into the public notice, they are welcome to it; and Mr. Johnson will, if he pleases, announce me to the world by the style and title of

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.
Of the Inner Temple.

If you are of my mind, I think *Table Talk* will be the best to begin with, as the subjects of it are perhaps more popular; and one would wish, at first setting out, to catch the public by the ear, and hold them by it as fast as possible, that they may be willing to hear one, on a second and a third occasion.

The passage you object to I inserted merely by way of catch, and think that it is not unlikely to answer the purpose. My design was to say as many serious things as I could, and yet to be as lively as was compatible with such a purpose. Do not imagine that I mean to stickle for it as a pretty creature of my own that I am loth to part with—but I am apprehensive that without the sprightliness of that passage to introduce it, the following paragraph would not show to advantage.—If the

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world had been filled with men like yourself, I should never have written it; but thinking myself in a measure obliged to tickle, if I meant to please, I therefore affected a jocularity I did not feel.—As to the rest, wherever there is war, there is misery and outrage; notwithstanding which it is not only lawful to wish, but even a duty to pray for the success of one's country. And as to the neutralities, I really think the Russian virago an impertinent puss for meddling with us, and engaging half a score kittens of her acquaintance to scratch the poor old lion, who, if he has been insolent in his day, has probably acted no otherwise than they themselves would have acted in his circumstances, and with his power to embolden them.

I am glad that the myrtles reached you safe, but am persuaded from past experience that no management will keep them long alive in London, especially in the city. Our English Trots[1], the natives of the country, are for the most part too delicate to thrive there, much more the nice Italian. To give them, however, the best chance they can have, the lady must keep them well watered, giving them a moderate quantity in summer time every other day, and in winter about twice a week; not spring-water, for that would kill them. At Michaelmas, as much of the mould as can be taken out without disturbing the roots must be evacuated, and its place supplied with fresh, the lighter the better. And once in two years the plants must be drawn out of their pots with the entire ball of earth

[1] What word has been thus mis-printed I am unable to guess, and the original letter is one of those which have not been preserved in Mr. Newton's collection. S.

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about them, and the matted roots pared off with a sharp knife, when they must be planted again with an addition of rich light earth as before. Thus dealt with, they will grow luxuriantly in a green-house, where they can have plenty of sweet air, which is absolutely necessary to their health. I used to purchase them at Covent Garden almost every year, when I lived in the Temple; but even in that airy situation they were sure to lose their leaf in winter, and seldom recovered it again in spring. I wish them a better fate at Hoxton.

Olney has seen this day what it never saw before, and what will serve it to talk of, I suppose, for years to come. At eleven o'clock this morning, a party of soldiers entered the town, driving before them another party, who, after obstinately defending the bridge for some time, were obliged to quit it, and run. They ran in very good order, frequently faced about and fired, but were at last obliged to surrender prisoners of war. There has been much drumming and shouting, much scampering about in the dirt, but not an inch of lace made in the town, at least at the Silver End of it.

It is our joint request that you will not again leave us unwritten to for a fortnight. We are so like yourselves in this particular, that we cannot help ascribing so long a silence to the worst cause. The longer your letters the better, but a short one is better than none.

Mrs. Unwin is pretty well, and adds the greetings of her love to mine.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 18, 1781.

A SLIGHT disorder in my larboard eye may possibly prevent my writing you a long letter, and would perhaps have prevented my writing at all, if I had not known that you account a fortnight's silence a week too long.

I am sorry that I gave you the trouble to write twice upon so trivial a subject as the passage in question. I did not understand by your first objections to it, that you thought it so exceptionable as you do; but being better informed, I immediately resolved to expunge it, and subjoin a few lines which you will oblige me by substituting in its place. I am not very fond of weaving a political thread into any of my pieces, and that for two reasons: first, because I do not think myself qualified, in point of intelligence, to form a decided opinion on any such topics; and secondly, because I think them, though perhaps as popular as any, the most useless of all. The following verses are designed to succeed immediately after

——— fights with justice on his side.
Let laurels, drench'd in pure Parnassian dews,
Reward *his* memory, dear to every Muse, &c.

I am obliged to you for your advice with respect to the manner of publication, and feel myself inclined to be determined by it. So far as I have proceeded on the subject of *Expostulation*, I have written with tolerable ease to myself, and in my own opinion (for an opinion I am obliged to have about what I write,

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whether I will or no,) with more emphasis and energy than in either of the others. But it seems to open upon me with an abundance of matter, that forebodes a considerable length; and the time of year is come when, what with walking and gardening, I can find but little leisure for the pen. I mean, however, as soon as I have engrafted a new scion into the *Progress of Error*, instead of Thelyphthora, and when I have transcribed *Truth*, and sent it to you, to apply myself to the composition last undertaken, with as much industry as I can. If therefore the three first are put into the press while I am spinning and weaving the last, the whole may perhaps be ready for publication before the proper season will be past. I mean at present that a few select smaller pieces, about seven or eight perhaps, the best I can find in a bookfull that I have by me, shall accompany them. All together, they will furnish, I should imagine, a volume of tolerable bulk, that need not be indebted to an unreasonable breadth of margin for the importance of its figure.

If a Board of Enquiry were to be established, at which poets were to undergo an examination respecting the motives that induced them to publish, and I were to be summoned to attend, that I might give an account of mine, I think I could truly say, what perhaps few poets could, that though I have no objection to lucrative consequences, if any such should follow, they are not my aim; much less is it my ambition to exhibit myself to the world as a genius. What then, says Mr. President, can possibly be your motive? I answer, with a bow—Amusement. There is nothing but this—no occupation within the compass of my

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small sphere, Poetry excepted—that can do much towards diverting that train of melancholy thoughts, which, when I am not thus employed, are for ever pouring themselves in upon me. And if I did not publish what I write, I could not interest myself sufficiently in my own success, to make an amusement of it.

In my account of the battle fought at Olney, I laid a snare for your curiosity, and succeeded. I supposed it would have an enigmatical appearance, and so it had; but like most other riddles, when it comes to be solved, you will find that it was not worth the trouble of conjecture.—There are soldiers quartered at Newport and at Olney. These met, by order of their respective officers, in Emberton Marsh, performed all the manœuvres of a deedy battle, and the result was that this town was taken. Since I wrote, they have again encountered with the same intention; and Mr. Raban kept a room for me and Mrs. Unwin, that we might sit and view them at our ease. We did so, but it did not answer our expectation; for before the contest could be decided, the powder on both sides being expended, the combatants were obliged to leave it an undecided contest. If it were possible that when two great armies spend the night in expectation of a battle, a third could silently steal away their ammunition and arms of every kind, what a comedy would it make of that which always has such a tragical conclusion!

Yours, my dear friend,

W^M. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 7, 1781.

MR. OLD brought us the acceptable news of your safe arrival. My sensations at your departure were far from pleasant, and Mrs. Unwin suffered more upon the occasion than when you first took leave of Olney. When we shall meet again, and in what circumstances, or whether we shall meet or not, is an article to be found no where but in that volume of Providence which belongs to the current year, and will not be understood till it is accomplished. This I know, that your visit was most agreeable here. It was so even to me, who, though I live in the midst of many agreeables, am but little sensible of their charms. But when you came, I determined, as much as possible, to be deaf to the suggestions of despair; that if I could contribute but little to the pleasure of the opportunity, I might not dash it with unseasonable melancholy, and, like an instrument with a broken string, interrupt the harmony of the concert.

Lady Austen, waving all forms, has paid us the first visit; and not content with showing us that proof of her respect, made handsome apologies for her intrusion. We returned the visit yesterday. She is a lively, agreeable woman; has seen much of the world, and accounts it a great simpleton, as it is. She laughs and makes laugh, and keeps up a conversation without seeming to labour at it.

I had rather submit to chastisement now, than be obliged to undergo it hereafter. If Johnson, therefore, will mark with a marginal Q, those lines that he

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or his object to as not sufficiently finished, I will willingly retouch them, or give a reason for my refusal. I shall moreover think myself obliged by any hints of that sort, as I do already to somebody, who, by running here and there two or three paragraphs into one, has very much improved the arrangement of my matter. I am apt, I know, to fritter it into too many pieces, and, by doing so, to disturb that order to which all writings must owe their perspicuity, at least in a considerable measure. With all that carefulness of revisal I have exercised upon the sheets as they have been transmitted to me, I have been guilty of an oversight, and have suffered a great fault to escape me, which I shall be glad to correct if not too late.

In the *Progress of Error*, a part of the Young Squire's apparatus, before he yet enters upon his travels, is said to be

> —— Memorandum-book to minute down
> The several posts, and where the chaise broke down.

Here, the reviewers would say, is not only "down," but "down derry down" into the bargain, the word being made to rhyme to itself. This never occurred to me till last night, just as I was stepping into bed. I should be glad, however, to alter it thus—

> With memorandum-book for every town,
> And every inn, and where the chaise broke down.

I have advanced so far in *Charity*, that I have ventured to give Johnson notice of it, and his option whether he will print it now or hereafter. I rather wish he may choose the present time, because it will

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be a proper sequel to *Hope*, and because I am willing to think it will embellish the collection. Mrs. Unwin purposes to send a couple of ducks by next Friday's diligence, when I imagine this last production will have a place in the basket.

Whoever means to take my phiz will find himself sorely perplexed in seeking for a fit occasion. That I shall not give him one is certain; and if he steals one, he must be as cunning and quick-sighted a thief as Autolycus himself. His best course will be to draw a face, and call it mine, at a venture. They who have not seen me these twenty years will say, It may possibly be a striking likeness now, though it bears no resemblance to what he was: time makes great alterations. They who know me better will say perhaps, Though it is not perfectly the thing, yet there is somewhat of the cast of his countenance. If the nose was a little longer, and the chin a little shorter, the eyes a little smaller, and the forehead a little more protuberant, it would be just the man. And thus, without seeing me at all, the artist may represent me to the public eye, with as much exactness as yours has bestowed upon you, though, I suppose, the original was full in his view when he made the attempt.

We are both as well as when you left us. Our hearty affections wait upon yourself and Mrs. Newton, not forgetting Euphrosyne, the laughing lady.

Yours, my dear Sir,

WM. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 16, 1781.

I MIGHT date my letter from the greenhouse, which we have converted into a summer parlour. The walls hung with garden mats, and the floor covered with a carpet, the sun too in a great measure excluded, by an awning of mats which forbids him to shine any where except upon the carpet, it affords us by far the pleasantest retreat in Olney. We eat, drink, and sleep, where we always did; but here we spend all the rest of our time, and find that the sound of the wind in the trees, and the singing of birds, are much more agreeable to our ears than the incessant barking of dogs and screaming of children. Not to mention the exchange of a sweet smelling garden, for the putrid exhalations of Silver End. It is an observation that naturally occurs upon the occasion, and which many other occasions furnish an opportunity to make, that people long for what they have not, and overlook the good in their possession. This is so true in the present instance, that for years past I should have thought myself happy to enjoy a retirement even less flattering to my natural taste than this in which I am now writing; and have often looked wistfully at a snug cottage, which, on account of its situation at a distance from noise and disagreeable objects, seemed to promise me all I could wish or expect, so far as happiness may be said to be local; never once adverting to this comfortable nook, which affords me all that could be found in the most sequestered hermitage, with the advantage of having all those accommodations near at

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hand which no hermitage could possibly afford me. People imagine they should be happy in circumstances which they would find insupportably burthensome in less than a week. A man that has been clothed in fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, envies the peasant under a thatched hovel; who, in return, envies him as much his palace and his pleasure-ground. Could they change situations, the fine gentleman would find his ceilings were too low, and that his casements admitted too much wind; that he had no cellar for his wine, and no wine to put in his cellar. These, with a thousand other mortifying deficiencies, would shatter his romantic project into innumerable fragments in a moment. The clown, at the same time, would find the accession of so much unwieldy treasure an incumbrance quite incompatible with an hour's ease. His choice would be puzzled by variety. He would drink to excess, because he would foresee no end of his abundance; and he would eat himself sick for the same reason. He would have no idea of any other happiness than sensual gratification; would make himself a beast, and die of his good fortune. The rich gentleman had, perhaps, or might have had, if he pleased, at the shortest notice, just such a recess as this; but if he had it, he overlooked it, or, if he had it not, forgot that he might command it whenever he would. The rustic too, was actually in possession of some blessings, which he was a fool to relinquish, but which he could neither see nor feel, because he had the daily and constant use of them; such as good health, bodily strength, a head and a heart that never ached, and temperance, to the practice of which he

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was bound by necessity, that, humanly speaking, was a pledge and a security for the continuance of them all.

Thus I have sent you a schoolboy's theme. When I write to you, I do not write without thinking, but always without premeditation: the consequence is, that such thoughts as pass through my head when I am not writing, make the subject of my letters to you.

Johnson sent me lately a sort of apology for his printer's negligence, with his promise of greater diligence for the future. There was need enough of both. I have received but one sheet since you left us. Still, indeed, I see that there is time enough before us; but I see likewise that no length of time can be sufficient for the accomplishment of a work that does not go forward. I know not yet whether he will add *Conversation* to those poems already in his hands, nor do I care much. No man ever wrote such quantities of verse, as I have written this last year, with so much indifference about the event, or rather, with so little ambition of public praise. My pieces are such as may possibly be made useful. The more they are approved, the more likely they are to spread, and consequently the more likely to attain the end of usefulness; which, as I said once before, except my present amusement, is the only end I propose. And even in the pursuit of this purpose, commendable as it is in itself, I have not the spur I should once have had;—my labour must go unrewarded, and as Mr. Raban once said, I am raising a scaffold before a house that others are to live in, and not I.

I have left myself no room for politics, which I

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thought, when I began, would have been my principal theme.

Mr. Symonds's letters certainly are not here. Our servants never touch a paper without leave, and are so observant of our injunction in this particular, that unless I burn the covers of the news, they accumulate till they make a litter.

Yours, my dear Sir,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 21, 1781.

You wish you could employ your time to better purpose, yet are never idle. In all that you say or do; whether you are alone, or pay visits, or receive them; whether you think or write, or walk or sit still; the state of your mind is such as discovers even to yourself, in spite of all its wanderings, that there is a principle at bottom whose determined tendency is towards the best things. I do not at all doubt the truth of what you say, when you complain of that crowd of trifling thoughts that pesters you without ceasing; but then you always have a serious thought standing at the door of your imagination, like a justice of peace with the riot-act in his hand, ready to read it, and disperse the mob. Here lies the difference between you and me. My thoughts are clad in a sober livery, for the most part as grave as that of a bishop's servants. They turn too upon spiritual subjects, but the tallest fellow and the loudest amongst them all, is he who is continually crying with a loud voice, *Actum est de te;*

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periisti! You wish for more attention, I for less. Dissipation itself would be welcome to me, so it were not a vicious one; but however earnestly invited, is coy, and keeps at a distance. Yet with all this distressing gloom upon my mind, I experience, as you do, the slipperiness of the present hour, and the rapidity with which time escapes me. Every thing around us, and every thing that befalls us, constitutes a variety, which, whether agreeable or otherwise, has still a thievish propensity, and steals from us days, months, and years, with such unparalleled address, that even while we say they are here, they are gone. From infancy to manhood is rather a tedious period, chiefly, I suppose, because at that time we act under the controul of others, and are not suffered to have a will of our own. But thence downward into the vale of years, is such a declivity, that we have just an opportunity to reflect upon the steepness of it, and then find ourselves at the bottom.

Here is a new scene opening, which, whether it perform what it promises or not, will add fresh plumes to the wings of time; at least while it continues to be a subject of contemplation. If the project take effect, a thousand varieties will attend the change it will make in our situation at Olney. If not, it will serve, however, to speculate and converse upon, and steal away many hours, by engaging our attention, before it be entirely dropped. Lady Austen, very desirous of retirement, especially of a retirement near her sister, an admirer of Mr. Scott as a preacher, and of your two humble servants now in the greenhouse, as the most

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agreeable creatures in the world, is at present determined to settle here. That part of our great building which is at present occupied by Dick Coleman, his wife, child, and a thousand rats, is the corner of the world she chooses, above all others, as the place of her future residence. Next spring twelvemonth she begins to repair and beautify, and the following winter (by which time the lease of her house in town will determine) she intends to take possession. I am highly pleased with the plan, upon Mrs. Unwin's account, who, since Mrs. Newton's departure, is destitute of all female connexion, and has not, in any emergency, a woman to speak to. Mrs. Scott is indeed in the neighbourhood, and an excellent person, but always engaged by a close attention to her family, and no more than ourselves a lover of visiting. But these things are all at present in the clouds. Two years must intervene, and in two years not only this project, but all the projects in Europe may be disconcerted.

Cocoa-nut naught,
Fish too dear,
None must be bought
For us that are here.

No lobster on earth,
That ever I saw,
To me would be worth
Sixpence a claw.

So, dear madam, wait
Till fish can be got
At a reas'nable rate,
Whether lobster or not;

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Till the French and the Dutch
Have quitted the seas,
And then send as much
And as oft as you please.

Yours, my dear sir,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 9, 1781.

I AM not willing to let the post set off without me, though I have nothing material to put into his bag. I am writing in the greenhouse, where my myrtles, ranged before the windows, make the most agreeable blind imaginable; where I am undisturbed by noise, and where I see none but pleasing objects. The situation is as favourable to my purpose as I could wish; but the state of my mind is not so, and the deficiencies I feel there are not to be remedied by the stillness of my retirement, or the beauty of the scene before me. I believe it is in part owing to the excessive heat of the weather, that I find myself so much at a loss when I attempt either verse or prose: my animal spirits are depressed, and dulness is the consequence. That dulness, however, is all at your service; and the portion of it that is necessary to fill up the present epistle, I send you without the least reluctance.

I am sorry to find that the censure I have passed upon Occiduus is even better founded than I supposed. Lady Austen has been at his sabbatical concerts, which, it seems are composed of song-tunes and psalm-tunes indiscriminately; music without words—and I suppose

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one may say, consequently, without devotion. On a certain occasion, when her niece was sitting at her side, she asked his opinion concerning the lawfulness of such amusements as are to be found at Vauxhall or Ranelagh; meaning only to draw from him a sentence of disapprobation, that Miss Green might be the better reconciled to the restraint under which she was held, when she found it warranted by the judgement of so famous a divine. But she was disappointed: he accounted them innocent, and recommended them as useful. Curiosity, he said, was natural to young persons; and it was wrong to deny them a gratification which they might be indulged in with the greatest safety; because the denial being unreasonable, the desire of it would still subsist. It was but a walk, and a walk was as harmless in one place as another; with other arguments of a similar import, which might have proceeded with more grace, at least with less offence, from the lips of a sensual layman. He seems, together with others of our acquaintance, to have suffered considerably in his spiritual character by his attachment to music. The lawfulness of it, when used with moderation, and in its proper place, is unquestionable; but I believe that wine itself, though a man be guilty of habitual intoxication, does not more debauch and befool the natural understanding, than music, always music, music in season and out of season, weakens and destroys the spiritual discernment. If it is not used with an unfeigned reference to the worship of God, and with a design to assist the soul in the performance of it, which cannot be the case when it is the only occupation, it degenerates into a sensual delight,

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and becomes a most powerful advocate for the admission of other pleasures, grosser perhaps in degree, but in their kind the same.

Mr. Monk, though a simple, honest, good man—such, at least, he appears to us—is not likely to give general satisfaction. He preaches the truth, it seems, but not the whole truth; and a certain member of that church, who signed the letter of invitation, which was conceived in terms sufficiently encouraging, is likely to prove one of his most strenuous opposers. The little man, however, has an independent fortune, and has nothing to do but to trundle himself away to some other place, where he may find hearers, neither so nice nor so wise as we are at Olney.

Yours, my dear Sir, with our united love,

W. C.

TO MRS. NEWTON.

Sept. 16, 1781.

A NOBLE theme demands a noble verse,
In such I thank you for your fine oys*ters*.
The barrel was magnificently large,
But being sent to Olney at free charge,
Was not inserted in the driver's list,
And therefore overlook'd, forgot, or miss'd;
For when the messenger whom we dispatch'd
Enquired for oysters, Hob his noddle scratch'd,
Denying that his waggon or his wain
Did any such commodity contain.
In consequence of which, your welcome boon
Did not arrive till yesterday at noon;

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In consequence of which some chanced to die,
And some, though very sweet, were very dry.
Now Madam says, (and what she says must still
Deserve attention, say she what she will,)
That what we call the Diligence, be-case
It goes to London with a swifter pace,
Would better suit the carriage of your gift,
Returning downward with a pace as swift;
And therefore recommends it with this aim—
To save at least three days,—the price the same;
For though it will not carry or convey
For less than twelve pence, send whate'er you may,
For oysters bred upon the salt sea shore,
Pack'd in a barrel, they will charge no more.
News have I none that I can deign to write,
Save that it rain'd prodigiously last night;
And that ourselves were, at the seventh hour,
Caught in the first beginning of the shower;
But walking, running, and with much ado,
Got home—just time enough to be wet through.
Yet both are well, and wond'rous to be told,
Soused as we were, we yet have caught no cold;
And wishing just the same good hap to you,
We say, good Madam, and good Sir, Adieu!

TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER.

SIR, Sept. 16, 1781.

By your not mentioning it, I suppose you have not yet received *Conversation;* shall be glad to know it when you have. *Retirement* is grown to about five

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hundred lines, so that I begin to hope I shall reach the end of it.

"Cry aloud," &c.

Though the verse has rather an unusual run, I chose to begin it in that manner for the sake of animation, and am not able to alter it without flattening its energy quite away.

"Providence adverse," &c.

The reduplication of those words was a point I rather laboured for the sake of emphasis, and the transposition of them strikes me as artful, and as having an agreeable effect upon the ear.

"Cured of golden calves," &c.

The expression has a figurative boldness in it, which appears to me poetical.

All your other marks have been attended to, and I thank you for them.

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient,
WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, The Greenhouse, Sept. 18, 1781.

I RETURN your preface, with many thanks for so affectionate an introduction to the public. I have observed nothing that in my judgement required alteration, except a single sentence in the first paragraph, which I have not obliterated, that you may restore

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it if you please, by obliterating my interlineation. My reason for proposing an amendment of it was, that your meaning did not strike me, which therefore I have endeavoured to make more obvious. The rest is what I would wish it to be. You say, indeed, more in my commendation, than I can modestly say of myself: but something will be allowed to the partiality of friendship, on so interesting an occasion.

I have no objection in the world to your conveying a copy to Dr. Johnson; though I well know that one of his pointed sarcasms, if he should happen to be displeased, would soon find its way into all companies, and spoil the sale. He writes, indeed, like a man that thinks a great deal, and that sometimes thinks religiously: but report informs me that he has been severe enough in his animadversions upon Dr. Watts, who was nevertheless, if I am in any degree a judge of verse, a man of true poetical ability; careless, indeed, for the most part, and inattentive too often to those niceties which constitute elegance of expression, but frequently sublime in his conceptions, and masterly in his execution. Pope, I have heard, had placed him once in the Dunciad; but on being advised to read before he judged him, was convinced that he deserved other treatment, and thrust somebody's blockhead into the gap, whose name, consisting of a monosyllable, happened to fit it. Whatever faults, however, I may be chargeable with as a poet, I cannot accuse myself of negligence. I never suffer a line to pass till I have made it as good as I can; and though my doctrines may offend this king of critics, he will not, I flatter

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myself, be disgusted by slovenly inaccuracy, either in the numbers, rhymes, or language. Let the rest take its chance. It is possible he may be pleased; and if he should, I shall have engaged on my side one of the best trumpeters in the kingdom. Let him only speak as favourably of me as he has spoken of Sir Richard Blackmore (who, though he shines in his poem called Creation, has written more absurdities in verse than any writer of our country), and my success will be secured.

I have often promised myself a laugh with you about your pipe, but have always forgotten it when I have been writing, and at present I am not much in a laughing humour. You will observe, however, for your comfort and the honour of that same pipe, that it hardly falls within the line of my censure. You never fumigate the ladies, or force them out of company; nor do you use it as an incentive to hard drinking. Your friends, indeed, have reason to complain that it frequently deprives them of the pleasure of your own conversation while it leads you either into your study or your garden; but in all other respects it is as innocent a pipe as can be. Smoke away, therefore; and remember that if one poet has condemned the practice, a better than he (the witty and elegant Hawkins Browne,) has been warm in the praise of it.

Retirement grows, but more slowly than any of its predecessors. Time was when I could with ease produce fifty, sixty, or seventy lines in a morning: now, I generally fall short of thirty, and am sometimes forced to be content with a dozen. It consists at present, I suppose, of between six and seven hundred; so that there are

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hopes of an end, and I dare say Johnson will give me time enough to finish it.

I nothing add but this—that *still I am*
Your most affectionate and humble

WILLIAM.

TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER.

SIR, Oct. 1, 1781.

I EXPECT to finish *Retirement* in a day or two, and as soon as transcribed I shall forward it to Mr. Newton. This addition, I think, will swell the volume to a respectable size, consisting, as I guess, of between seven and eight hundred lines. I may now grant myself a respite, and watch the success of the present undertaking, determining myself by the event, whether to resume my occupation as an author or drop it for ever.

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient Servant,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 3, 1781.

YOUR draft is worded for twenty pounds, and figured for twenty-one. I thought it more likely the mistake should be made in the figures than in the words, and have sent you a receipt accordingly. I am obliged to you for it, and no less bound to acknowledge your kindness in thinking for a man so little accustomed to think for himself. The result of my deliberations on

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the subject proposed is, that it will be better, on many accounts, to sell the chambers, and to deposit the money in the funds. Public credit wants a lift, and I would willingly shew my readiness to afford it one at so critical a juncture. If you can sell Morgan at the same time, so as to turn him to any account, you have my free leave to do it. It has been a dry summer, and frogs may possibly be scarce, and fetch a good price; though how his frogship has attained to the honour of that appellation, at this distance from the scene of his activity, I am not able to conjecture.

I hope you have had a pleasant vacation, and have laid in a fresh stock of health and spirits for the business of the approaching winter. As for me, I have just finished my last piece called *Retirement;* which, as soon as it is fit to appear in public, shall, together with all the rest of its fraternity, lay itself at your feet.

My affectionate respects attend Mrs. Hill and yourself. Yours truly,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 14, 1781.

I WOULD not willingly deprive you of any comfort, and therefore would wish you to comfort yourself as much as you can with a notion that you are a more bountiful correspondent than I. You will give me leave in the mean time, however, to assert to myself a share in the same species of consolation, and to enjoy the flattering recollection that I have sometimes written three

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letters to your one. I never knew a poet, except myself, who was punctual in any thing, or to be depended on for the due discharge of any duty, except what he thought he owed to the Muses. The moment a man takes it into his foolish head that he has what the world calls Genius, he gives himself a discharge from the servile drudgery of all friendly offices, and becomes good for nothing, except in the pursuit of his favourite employment. But I am not yet vain enough to think myself entitled to such self-conferred honours, and though I have sent much poetry to the press, or, at least, what I hope my readers will account such, am still as desirous as ever of a place in your heart, and to take all opportunities to convince you that you have still the same in mine. My attention to my poetical function has, I confess, a little interfered of late with my other employments, and occasioned my writing less frequently than I should have otherwise done. But it is over, at least for the present, and I think for some time to come. I have transcribed *Retirement*, and send it. You will be so good as to forward it to Johnson, who will forward it, I suppose, to the public, in his own time; but not very speedily, moving as he does. The post brought me a sheet this afternoon, but we have not yet reached the end of *Hope*.

Mr. Scott, I perceive by yours to him, has mentioned one of his troubles, but I believe not the principal one. The question, whether he shall have an assistant at the great house in Mr. G. Raban, is still a question, or, at least, a subject of discontent, between Mr. Scott and the people. In a *tête-à-tête* I had with this candidate for the chair, in the course of the last week, I

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told him my thoughts upon the subject plainly; advised him to change places, by the help of fancy, with Mr. Scott, for a moment, and to ask himself how *he* would like a self-intruded deputy; advised him likewise by no means to address Mr. Scott any more upon the matter, for that he might be sure he would never consent to it; and concluded with telling him, that if he persisted in his purpose of speaking to the people, the probable consequence would be, that sooner or later, Mr. Scott would be forced out of the parish, and the blame of his expulsion would all light upon him. He heard, approved, and, I think the very next day, put all my good counsel to shame, at least a considerable part of it, by applying to Mr. Scott, in company with Mr. Perry, for his permission to speak at the Sunday evening lecture. Mr. Scott, as I had foretold, was immoveable; but offered, for the satisfaction of his hearers, to preach three times to them on the Sabbath, which he could have done, Mr. Jones having kindly offered, though without their knowledge, to officiate for him at Weston. Mr. Raban answered, "That will not do, Sir; it is not what the people wish; they want variety." Mr. Scott replied very wisely, "If they do, they must be content without it; it is not my duty to indulge that humour." This is the last intelligence I have had upon the subject. I received it not from Mr. Scott, but from an ear-witness.

I did not suspect, till the Reviewers told me so, that you are made up of artifice and design, and that your ambition is to delude your hearers. Well—I suppose they please themselves with the thought of having mortified you; but how much are they mistaken!

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They shot at you, and their arrow struck the Bible, recoiling, of course, upon themselves. My turn will come, for I think I shall hardly escape a threshing.

Yours, my dear Sir,
and Mrs. Newton's,
WM. COWPER.

TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER.

SIR, Olney, Oct. 20, 1781.

I ACKNOWLEDGE with pleasure the accuracy of your remark on the two lines you have scored in the first page of the inclosed sheet; but though the word *there* in its critical and proper use is undoubtedly an adverb denoting locality, yet I cannot but think that in the familiar strain of poetical colloquy (especially if the gay careless air of the speaker in the present instance be considered) a less exact application of it may be allowed. We say in common speech—you was scrupulous on that occasion; *there* I think you was wrong, —meaning in that part of your conduct. I do not know indeed that I should hesitate to give it that sense, if I were writing prose for the press instead of verse, or on any other occasion whatsoever.

The unexpected arrival of the inclosed so soon after the foregoing sheet has inspired me with hopes that your printer is about to proceed with the alacrity he promised so long since. It proves, however, that he is capable of great dispatch when he is pleased to use it. I am Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,
WM. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 22, 1781.

MR. BATES, without intending it, has passed a severer censure upon the modern world of readers, than any that can be found in my volume. If they are so merrily disposed, in the midst of a thousand calamities, that they will not deign to read a preface of three or four pages, because the purport of it is serious, they are far gone indeed, and in the last stage of a frenzy, such as I suppose has prevailed in all nations that have been exemplarily punished, just before the infliction of the sentence. But though he lives in the world he has so ill an opinion of, and ought therefore to know it better than I, who have no intercourse with it at all, I am willing to hope that he may be mistaken. Curiosity is an universal passion. There are few people who think a book worth their reading, but feel a desire to know something about the writer of it. This desire will naturally lead them to peep into the preface, where they will soon find that a little perseverance will furnish them with some information on the subject. If, therefore, your preface finds no readers, I shall take it for granted that it is because the book itself is accounted not worth their notice. Be that as it may, it is quite sufficient that I have played the antic myself for their diversion; and that, in a state of dejection such as they are absolute strangers to, I have sometimes put on an air of cheerfulness and vivacity, to which I myself am in reality a stranger, for the sake of winning their attention to more useful matter. I cannot endure

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the thought for a moment, that you should descend to my level on the occasion, and court their favour in a style not more unsuitable to your function, than to the constant and consistent strain of your whole character and conduct. No—let the preface stand. I cannot mend it. I could easily make a jest of it, but it is better as it is.

By the way—will it not be proper, as you have taken some notice of the modish dress I wear in *Table-Talk*, to include *Conversation* in the same description, which is (the first half of it, at least,) the most airy of the two? They will otherwise think, perhaps, that the observation might as well have been spared entirely; though I should have been sorry if it had, for when I am jocular I do violence to myself, and am therefore pleased with your telling them, in a civil way, that I play the fool to amuse them, not because I am one myself, but because I have a foolish world to deal with.

I am inclined to think that Mr. Scott will no more be troubled by Mr. Raban, with applications of the sort I mentioned in my last. Mr. Scott, since I wrote that account, has related to us, himself, what passed in the course of their interview; and, it seems, the discourse ended with his positive assurance, that he never would consent to the measure, though at the same time, he declared he would never interrupt or attempt to suppress it. To which Mr. Raban replied, that unless he had his free consent, he should never engage in the office. It is to be hoped, therefore, that, in time, that part of the people, who may at present be

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displeased with Mr. Scott, for withholding his consent, will grow cool upon the subject, and be satisfied with receiving their instruction from their proper minister.

I beg you will, on no future occasion, leave a blank for Mrs. Newton, unless you have first engaged her promise to fill it: for thus we lose the pleasure of your company, without being indemnified for the loss, by the acquisition of hers. Johnson sent me two sheets in the course of the last ten days, to my great astonishment. I complimented him upon his alacrity in hopes that encouragement might ensure the continuance of it. The next sheet will bring the beginning of *Charity*. Our love to you both.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER.

SIR, Olney, Nov. 27, 1781.

YOU will oblige me by telling me in your next, whether, if I should find it proper to displace a paragraph in *Expostulation*, and substitute another in its stead, there is yet time for the purpose. I have doubts about the expedience of mentioning the subject on which that paragraph is written.

Many thanks for your judicious remarks.

I am, &c.

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 30, 1781.

THOUGH I have a deal of wit, and Mrs. Unwin has much more, it would require more than our joint stock amounts to, to answer all the demands of these gloomy days and long evenings. Books are the only remedy I can think of, but books are a commodity we deal but little in at Olney. If therefore it may consist with your other various multifarious concerns, I shall be obliged to you if you will be so good as to subscribe for me to some well-furnished circulating library, and leave my address upon the counter, written in a legible hand, and order them to send me down a catalogue. Their address you will be so good as to transmit to me, and then you shall have no further trouble.

This being merely a letter of business I add no more, but that

I am yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 2, 1781.

I THANK you for the note. There is some advantage in having a tenant who is irregular in his payments: the longer the rent is withheld, the more considerable the sum when it arrives; to which we may add, that its arrival being unexpected, a circumstance that obtains always in a degree exactly in proportion to the badness of the tenant, is always sure to be the

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occasion of an agreeable surprise; a sensation that deserves to be ranked among the pleasantest that belong to us.

I gave two hundred and fifty pounds for the chambers. Mr. Ashurst's receipt, and the receipt of the person of whom he purchased, are both among my papers; and when wanted, as I suppose they will be in case of a sale, shall be forthcoming at your order.

The conquest of America seems to go on but slowly. Our ill success in that quarter will oblige me to suppress two pieces that I was rather proud of. They were written two or three years ago; not long after the double repulse sustained by Mr. D'Estaing at Lucia and at Savannah, and when our operations in the western world wore a more promising aspect. Presuming, upon such promises, that I might venture to prophesy an illustrious consummation of the war, I did so. But my predictions proving false, the verse in which they were expressed must perish with them.

Since I began to write, I have searched all the papers I have, and cannot find the receipts abovementioned. I hope, however, they are not essential to the validity of the transaction.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W^M. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 9, 1781.

HAVING returned you many thanks for the fine cod and oysters you favoured me with, though it is now morning I will suppose it afternoon, that you and I dined together, are comfortably situated by a good fire, and just entering on a sociable conversation. You speak first, because I am a man of few words.

Well, Cowper, what do you think of this American war?

I. To say the truth I am not very fond of thinking about it; when I do I think of it, unpleasantly enough. I think it bids fair to be the ruin of the country.

You. That's very unpleasant indeed! If that should be the consequence, it will be the fault of those who might put a stop to it if they would.

I. But do you really think that practicable?

You. Why not? If people leave off fighting, peace follows of course. I wish they would withdraw the forces and put an end to the squabble.

Now I am going to make a long speech.

I. You know the complexion of my sentiments upon some subjects well enough, and that I do not look upon public events either as fortuitous, or absolutely derivable either from the wisdom or folly of man. These indeed operate as second causes; but we must look for the cause of the decline or the prosperity of an empire elsewhere. I have long since done complaining of men and measures, having learned to consider them merely as the instruments of a higher Power, by which he either bestows wealth, peace, and dignity

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upon a nation when he favours it; or by which he strips it of all those honours, when public enormities long persisted in provoke him to inflict a public punishment. The counsels of great men become as foolish and preposterous when he is pleased to make them so, as those of the frantic creatures in Bedlam, when they lay their distracted heads together to consider of the state of the nation. But I go still farther. The wisdom, or the want of wisdom, that we observe or think we observe in those that rule us, entirely out of the question, I cannot look upon the circumstances of this country, without being persuaded that I discern in them an entanglement and perplexity that I have never met with in the history of any other, which I think preternatural (if I may use the word on such a subject), prodigious in its kind, and such as human sagacity can never remedy. I have a good opinion of the understanding and integrity of some in power, yet I see plainly that they are unequal to the task. I think as favourably of some that are not in power, yet I am sure they have never yet in any of their speeches recommended the plan that would effect the salutary purpose. If we pursue the war, it is because we are desperate; it is plunging and sinking year after year into still greater depths of calamity. If we relinquish it, the remedy is equally desperate, and would prove I believe in the end no remedy at all. Either way we are undone. Perseverance will only enfeeble us more; we cannot recover the colonies by arms. If we discontinue the attempt, in that case we fling away voluntarily what in the other we strive ineffectually to regain; and whether we adopt the one measure or the

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other, are equally undone: for I consider the loss of America as the ruin of England. Were we less encumbered than we are at home, we could but ill afford it; but being crushed as we are under an enormous debt that the public credit can at no rate carry much longer, the consequence is sure. Thus it appears to me that we are squeezed to death, between the two sides of that sort of alternative which is commonly called a cleft stick, the most threatening and portentous condition in which the interests of any country can possibly be found.

I think I have done pretty well for a man of few words, and have contrived to have all the talk to myself. I thank you for not interrupting me.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 17, 1781.

THE poem I had in hand when I wrote last is on the subject of Friendship. By the following post I received a packet from Johnson. The proof-sheet it contained brought our business down to the latter part of *Retirement;* the next will consequently introduce the first of the smaller pieces. The volume consisting, at least four-fifths of it, of heroic verse as it is called and graver matter, I was desirous to displace the Burning Mountain from the post it held in the van of the light infantry, and throw it into the rear. Having finished *Friendship*, and fearing that if I delayed to send it, the press would get the start of

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my intention, and knowing perfectly that with respect to the subject, and the subject matter of it, it contained nothing that you would think exceptionable, I took the liberty to transmit it to Johnson, and hope that the next post will return it to me printed. It consists of between thirty and forty stanzas; a length that qualifies it to supply the place of the two cancelled pieces, without the aid of the Epistle I mentioned. According to the present arrangement, therefore, *Friendship*, which is rather of a lively cast, though quite sober, will follow next after *Retirement*, and *Ætna* will close the volume. Modern naturalists, I think, tell us that the volcano forms the mountain. I shall be charged therefore, perhaps, with an unphilosophical error in supposing that Ætna was once unconscious of intestine fires, and as lofty as at present before the commencement of the eruptions. It is possible, however, that the rule, though just in some instances, may not be of universal application; and if it be, I do not know that a poet is obliged to write with a philosopher at his elbow, prepared always to bind down his imagination to mere matters of fact. You will oblige me by your opinion; and tell me, if you please, whether you think an apologetical note may be necessary; for I would not appear a dunce in matters that every Review-reader must needs be apprized of. I say a note, because an alteration of the piece is impracticable; at least without cutting off its head, and setting on a new one; a task I should not readily undertake, because the lines which must, in that case, be thrown out, are some of the most poetical in the performance.

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Possessing greater advantages, and being equally dissolute with the most abandoned of the neighbouring nations, we are certainly more criminal than they. They *cannot* see, and we *will* not. It is to be expected, therefore, that when judgement is walking through the earth, it will come commissioned with the heaviest tidings to the people chargeable with the most perverseness. In the latter part of the Duke of Newcastle's administration, all faces gathered blackness. The people, as they walked the streets, had, every one of them, a countenance like what we may suppose to have been the prophet Jonah's, when he cried "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." But our Nineveh too repented, that is to say, she was affected in a manner somewhat suitable to her condition. She was dejected; she learned an humbler language, and seemed, if she did not trust in God, at least to have renounced her confidence in herself. A respite ensued; the expected ruin was averted; and her prosperity became greater than ever. Again she became self-conceited and proud, as at the first; and how stands it with our Nineveh now? Even as you say; her distress is infinite, her destruction appears inevitable, and her heart as hard as the nether millstone. Thus, I suppose, it was when ancient Nineveh found herself agreeably disappointed; she turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and that flagrant abuse of mercy exposed her, at the expiration of forty years, to the complete execution of a sentence she had only been threatened with before. A similarity of events, accompanied by a strong similarity of conduct, seems to justify our expectations that the catastrophe will

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not be very different. But after all, the designs of Providence are inscrutable, and as in the case of individuals, so in that of nations, the same causes do not always produce the same effects. The country indeed cannot be saved in its present state of profligacy and profaneness, but may, nevertheless, be led to repentance by means we are little aware of, and at a time when we least expect it.

In the mislaid letters I took notice of certain disagreeable doubts you had expressed in one enclosed to us and unsealed, concerning your visit next spring to Olney. You will be so good as to send those doubts packing, and convince them that they are unreasonable intruders, by coming down as soon as your famous festival is over. We have to thank you for a barrel of oysters, exceeding good.

Our best love attends yourself and Mrs. Newton, and we rejoice that you feel no burthens but those you bear in common with the liveliest and most favoured Christians.—It is a happiness in poor Peggy's case that she can swallow five shillings' worth of physic in a day, but a person must be in her case to be duly sensible of it.

Your's, my dear Sir,

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin begs Mrs. Newton's acceptance of a couple of chickens. She would have sent a goose, but none have come our way.

James Robinson was buried on Sunday. The opinion of the well-informed is that his drams cost him a guinea a week to the last.

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TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER.

SIR, 1781.

I ALWAYS ascribe your silence to the cause you assign for it yourself. I inclose *Friendship*, in hopes that it may arrive in time to stand the foremost of the smaller pieces, instead of *Ætna*, which, perhaps, had better be placed at the end. Such a length of the *penseroso* will make the *allegro* doubly welcome; but if the press has gone forward and begun *Ætna*, it is of no great importance: otherwise I should prefer this arrangement, as we shall then begin and end with a compliment to the King—who (poor man) may at this time be glad of such a tribute.

Instead of the fifth line in the supplemental passage you have received, in which the word *disgrace* is inadvertently repeated, being mentioned in the first, I would wish you to insert the following—

"When sin has shed dishonour on thy brow."

But if the passage is already printed I can make the alteration myself when the sheet comes down for the last revisal.

P. 288. ———"because they must."

I suppose you scored these words as of an import too similar to the word *convenience*, I have therefore relieved the objection by the word *self-impoverished;* otherwise it does not appear to me that the expression is objectionable: it is plain, indeed, but not bald.

I am Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 31, 1782.

HAVING thanked you for a barrel of very fine oysters, I should have nothing more to say, if I did not determine to say every thing that may happen to occur. The political world affords us no very agreeable subjects at present, nor am I sufficiently conversant with it, to do justice to so magnificent a theme, if it did. A man that lives as I do, whose chief occupation, at this season of the year, is to walk ten times in a day from the fire-side to his cucumber frame and back again, cannot show his wisdom more, if he has any wisdom to show, than by leaving the mysteries of government to the management of persons, in point of situation and information, much better qualified for the business. Suppose not, however, that I am perfectly an unconcerned spectator, or that I take no interest at all in the affairs of my country; far from it—I read the news—I see that things go wrong in every quarter. I meet, now and then, with an account of some disaster that seems to be the indisputable progeny of treachery, cowardice, or a spirit of faction; I recollect that in those happier days, when you and I could spend our evening in enumerating victories and acquisitions that seemed to follow each other in a continued series, there was some pleasure in hearing a politician; and a man might talk away upon so entertaining a subject, without danger of becoming tiresome to others, or incurring weariness himself. When poor Bob White brought me the news of Boscawen's success off the coast of Portugal, how did I leap for

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joy! When Hawke demolished Conflans, I was still more transported. But nothing could express my rapture, when Wolfe made the conquest of Quebec. I am not, therefore, I suppose destitute of true patriotism, but the course of public events has, of late, afforded me no opportunity to exert it. I cannot rejoice, because I see no reason, and I will not murmur, because for that I can find no good one. And let me add, he that has seen both sides of fifty, has lived to little purpose, if he has not other views of the world than he had when he was much younger. He finds, if he reflects at all, that it will be to the end, what it has been from the beginning, a shifting, uncertain, fluctuating scene; that nations, as well as individuals, have their seasons of infancy, youth, and age. If he be an Englishman, he will observe that ours, in particular, is affected with every symptom of decay, and is already sunk into a state of decrepitude. I am reading Mrs. M'Aulay's History. I am not quite such a superannuated simpleton, as to suppose that mankind were wiser or much better, when I was young, than they are now. But I may venture to assert, without exposing myself to the charge of dotage, that the men whose integrity, courage, and wisdom, broke the bands of tyranny, established our constitution upon its true basis, and gave a people, overwhelmed with the scorn of all countries, an opportunity to emerge into a state of the highest respect and estimation, make a better figure in history than any of the present day are likely to do, when their pretty harangues are forgotten, and nothing shall survive but the remembrance of the views and motives with which they made them.

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My dear friend, I have written at random, in every sense, neither knowing what sentiments I should broach, when I began, nor whether they would accord with yours. Excuse a rustic, if he errs on such a subject, and believe me sincerely yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER.

SIR, Jan. 31, 1782.

You will find your two queries satisfied by the correction of the press.

P. 338. Though perhaps the exactest rhymes may not be required in these lighter pieces, I yet choose to be as regular in this particular as I can, I have therefore displaced half a stanza, for the sake of introducing better. You will observe that I have made some other corrections, which though they be for the most part but a letter or a stop, were yet such as were very necessary either with regard to the expression or the sense. I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 14, 1782.

As servant maids, and such sort of folks, account a letter good for nothing, unless it begins with—This comes hoping you are well, as I am at this present: so I should be chargeable with a great omission, were

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I not to make frequent use of the following grateful exordium—Many thanks for a fine cod and oysters.—Your bounty never arrived more seasonably. I had just been observing that among other deplorable effects of the war, the scarcity of fish which it occasioned, was severely felt at Olney; but your plentiful supply immediately reconciled me, though not to the war, yet to my small share in the calamities it produces.

I hope my bookseller has paid due attention to the order I gave him to furnish you with my books. The composition of those pieces afforded me an agreeable amusement at intervals, for about a twelvemonth; and I should be glad to devote the leisure hours of another twelvemonth to the same occupation; at least, if my lucubrations should meet with a favourable acceptance. But I cannot write when I would; and whether I shall find readers, is a problem not yet decided. So the Muse and I are parted for the present.

I sent Lord Thurlow a volume, and a letter with it, which I communicate because you will undoubtedly have some curiosity to see it.

Yours,

W^m^. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 27, 1782.

I AM to thank you, though in great haste, for a very fine turbot and lobster its companion. Are you not going into the country? Shall I not hear from you when you are a little at leisure? I do not forget that you write innumerable letters upon business; but methinks a

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letter now and then not upon business should for that very reason be a refreshment to you. How fares the nation? You think I differ from you in politics. In truth I do not, I am ready at a moment's warning to adopt yours, and renounce my own. The nook I live in affords me no means of making up a set of opinions on any such subject so well founded as not to be departed from.—My respects attend Mrs. Hill.

Your affectionate,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 6, 1782.

YESTERDAY, and not before, I received your letter, dated 11th of June, from the hands of Mr. Small. I should have been happy to have known him sooner; but whether being afraid of that horned monster, a Methodist, or whether from a principle of delicacy, or deterred by a flood, which has rolled for some weeks between Clifton and Olney, I know not,—he has favoured me only with a taste of his company, and will leave me on Saturday evening, to regret that our acquaintance, so lately begun, must be so soon suspended. He will dine with us that day, which I reckon a fortunate circumstance, as I shall have an opportunity to introduce him to the liveliest and most entertaining woman in the country. I have seen him but for half an hour, yet without boasting of much discernment, I see that he is polite, easy, cheerful, and sensible. An old man thus qualified, cannot fail to charm the lady in question. As to his religion, I

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leave it—I am neither his bishop nor his confessor. A man of his character, and recommended by you, would be welcome here, were he a Gentoo, or a Mahometan.

I learn from him that certain friends of mine, whom I have been afraid to enquire about by letter, are alive and well. The current of twenty years has swept away so many, whom I once knew, that I doubted whether it might be adviseable to send my love to your mother and your sisters. They may have thought my silence strange, but they have here the reason of it. Assure them of my affectionate remembrance, and that nothing would make me happier than to receive you all in my green-house, your own Mrs. Hill included. It is fronted with myrtles, and lined with mats, and would just hold us, for Mr. Small informs me *your* dimensions are much the same as usual.

Yours, my dear friend,

W^m^. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 11, 1782.

YOUR shocking scrawl, as you term it, was, however, a very welcome one. The character, indeed, has not quite the neatness and beauty of an engraving; but, if it cost me some pains to decypher it, they were well rewarded by the minute information it conveyed. I am glad your health is such, that you have nothing more to complain of than may be expected on the down-hill side of life. If mine is better than yours, it is to be attributed, I suppose, principally, to the constant enjoyment of country air and retirement; the

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most perfect regularity in matters of eating, drinking, and sleeping; and a happy emancipation from every thing that wears the face of business. I lead the life I always wished for, and, the single circumstance of dependence excepted, (which, between ourselves, is very contrary to my predominant humour and disposition,) have no want left broad enough for another wish to stand upon.

You may not, perhaps, live to see your trees attain to the dignity of timber;—I, nevertheless, approve of your planting, and the disinterested spirit that prompts you to it. Few people plant, when they are young; a thousand other less profitable amusements divert their attention; and most people, when the date of youth is once expired, think it too late to begin. I can tell you, however, for your comfort and encouragement, that when a grove, which Major Cowper had planted, was of eighteen years growth, it was no small ornament to his grounds, and afforded as complete a shade as could be desired. Were I as old as your mother, in whose longevity I rejoice, and the more, because I consider it as, in some sort, a pledge and assurance of yours, and should come to the possession of land worth planting, I would begin to-morrow, and even without previously insisting upon a bond from Providence that I should live five years longer.

I saw last week a gentleman who was lately at Hastings. I asked him where he lodged. He replied at P——'s. I next enquired after the poor man's wife, whether alive or dead. He answered, dead. So then, said I, she has scolded her last; and a sensible

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old man will go down to his grave in peace. Mr. P——, to be sure, is of no great consequence, either to you, or to me; but having so fair an opportunity to inform myself about him, I could not neglect it. It gives me pleasure to learn somewhat of a man I knew a little of so many years since, and for that reason merely I mention the circumstance to you.

I find a single expression in your letter which needs correction. You say I carefully avoid paying you a visit at Wargrave. Not so;—but connected as I happily am, and rooted where I am, and not having travelled these twenty years,—being, besides, of an indolent temper, and having spirits that cannot bear a bustle—all these are so many insuperables in the way. They are not, however, in yours; and if you and Mrs. Hill will make the experiment, you shall find yourselves as welcome here, both to me and to Mrs. Unwin, as it is possible you can be any where.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 1782.

I AM to thank you for a fine cod, which came most opportunely to make a figure on our table, on an occasion that made him singularly welcome. I write, and you send me a fish. This is very well, but not altogether what I want. I wish to hear from you, because the fish, though he serves to convince me that you have me still in remembrance, says not a word of

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those that sent him, and with respect to your and Mrs. Hill's health, prosperity, and happiness, leaves me as much in the dark as before. You are aware, likewise, that where there is an exchange of letters it is much easier to write. But I know the multiplicity of your affairs, and therefore perform my part of the correspondence as well as I can, convinced that you would not omit yours, if you could help it.

Three days since I received a note from old Mr. Small, which was more than civil—it was warm and friendly. The good veteran excuses himself for not calling upon me, on account of the feeble state in which a fit of the gout had left him. He tells me, however, that he has seen Mrs. Hill, and your improvements at Wargrave, which will soon become an ornament to the place. May they! and may you both live long to enjoy them! I shall be sensibly mortified if the season and his gout together, should deprive me of the pleasure of receiving him here; for he is a man much to my taste, and quite an unique in this country.

When it suits you to send me some more of Elliott's medicines, I shall be obliged to you. My eyes are, in general, better than I remember them to have been, since I first opened them upon this sublunary stage, which is now a little more than half a century ago; yet I do not think myself safe, either without those remedies, or when, through long keeping, they have, in part, lost their virtue. I seldom use them without thinking of our trip to Maidenhead, where I first experienced their efficacy. We are growing old; but this is between ourselves: the world knows nothing

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of the matter. Mr. Small tells me you look much as you did: and as for me, being grown rather plump, the ladies tell me I am as young as ever.

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. NEWTON.

MY DEAR MADAM, Nov. 23, 1782.

THE soles with which you favoured us were remarkably fine. Accept our thanks for them; thanks likewise for the trouble you take in vending my poems, and still more for the interest you take in their success. My authorship is undoubtedly pleased when I hear that they are approved either by the great or the small; but to be approved by the great, as Horace observed many years ago, is fame indeed. Having met with encouragement, I consequently wish to write again; but wishes are a very small part of the qualifications necessary for such a purpose. Many a man who has succeeded tolerably well in his first attempt, has spoiled all by the second. But it just occurs to me that I told you so once before, and if my memory had served me with the intelligence a minute sooner, I would not have repeated the observation now.

The winter sets in with great severity. The rigour of the season, and the advanced price of grain, are very threatening to the poor. It is well with those that can feed upon a promise, and wrap themselves up warm in the robe of salvation. A good fire-side and a well-spread table are but very indifferent substitutes

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for these better accommodations; so very indifferent, that I would gladly exchange them both, for the rags and the unsatisfied hunger of the poorest creature that looks forward with hope to a better world, and weeps tears of joy in the midst of penury and distress. What a world is this! How mysteriously governed, and, in appearance left to itself. One man, having squandered thousands at a gaming-table, finds it convenient to travel; gives his estate to somebody to manage for him; amuses himself a few years in France and Italy; returns, perhaps, wiser than he went, having acquired knowledge which, but for his follies, he would never have acquired; again makes a splendid figure at home, shines in the senate, governs his country as its minister, is admired for his abilities, and, if successful, adored, at least by a party. When he dies he is praised as a demi-god, and his monument records every thing but his vices. The exact contrast of such a picture is to be found in many cottages at Olney. I have no need to describe them; you know the characters I mean. They love God, they trust him, they pray to him in secret, and though he means to reward them openly, the day of recompense is delayed. In the mean time they suffer every thing that infirmity and poverty can inflict upon them. Who would suspect, that has not a spiritual eye to discern it, that the fine gentleman was one whom his Maker had in abhorrence, and the wretch last-mentioned, dear to him as the apple of his eye? It is no wonder that the world, who are not in the secret, find themselves obliged, some of them, to doubt a Providence, and others, absolutely to deny it, when almost all the real virtue there is in it, is to be

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found living and dying in a state of neglected obscurity, and all the vices of others cannot exclude them from the privilege of worship and honour! But behind the curtain the matter is explained; very little, however, to the satisfaction of the great.

If you ask me why I have written thus, and to you especially, to whom there was no need to write thus, I can only reply, that having a letter to write, and no news to communicate, I picked up the first subject I found, and pursued it as far as was convenient for my purpose.

Mr. Newton and I are of one mind on the subject of patriotism. Our dispute was no sooner begun than it ended. It would be well, perhaps, if, when two disputants begin to engage, their friends would hurry each into a separate chaise, and order them to opposite points of the compass. Let one travel twenty miles east; the other as many west; then let them write their opinions by the post. Much altercation and chafing of the spirit would be prevented; they would sooner come to a right understanding, and running away from each other, would carry on the combat more judiciously, in exact proportion to the distance.

My love to that gentleman, if you please; and tell him, that, like him, though I love my country, I hate its follies and its sins, and had rather see it scourged in mercy, than judicially hardened by prosperity.

Mrs. Unwin is not very well, but better than she has been. She adds her love to both.

Yours, my dear Madam, as ever,

W^m. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 7, 1782.

AT seven o'clock this evening, being the seventh of December, I imagine I see you in your box at the coffee-house. No doubt the waiter, as ingenious and adroit as his predecessors were before him, raises the teapot to the ceiling with his right hand, while in his left the teacup descending almost to the floor, receives a limpid stream; limpid in its descent, but no sooner has it reached its destination, than frothing and foaming to the view, it becomes a roaring syllabub. This is the nineteenth winter since I saw you in this situation; and if nineteen more pass over me before I die, I shall still remember a circumstance we have often laughed at.

How different is the complexion of your evenings and mine!—yours, spent amid the ceaseless hum that proceeds from the inside of fifty noisy and busy periwigs; mine, by a domestic fireside, in a retreat as silent as retirement can make it; where no noise is made but what we make for our own amusement. For instance, here are two rustics, and your humble servant in company. One of the ladies has been playing on the harpsichord, while I, with the other, have been playing at battledore and shuttlecock. A little dog, in the mean time, howling under the chair of the former, performed, in the vocal way, to admiration. This entertainment over, I began my letter, and having nothing more important to communicate, have given you an account of it. I know you love dearly to be idle, when you can find an opportunity to be so; but as

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such opportunities are rare with you, I thought it possible that a short description of the idleness I enjoy might give you pleasure. The happiness we cannot call our own, we yet seem to possess, while we sympathise with our friends who can.

The papers tell me that peace is at hand, and that it is at a great distance; that the siege of Gibraltar is abandoned, and that it is to be still continued. It is happy for me, that though I love my country, I have but little curiosity. There was a time when these contradictions would have distressed me, but I have learnt by experience that it is best for little people like myself to be patient, and to wait till time affords the intelligence which no speculations of theirs can ever furnish.

I thank you for a fine cod with oysters, and hope that ere long, I shall have to thank you for procuring me Elliott's medicines. Every time I feel the least uneasiness in either eye, I tremble lest, my Æsculapius being departed, my infallible remedy should be lost for ever. Adieu. My respects to Mrs. Hill.

Yours, faithfully,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 26, 1783.

It is reported among persons of the best intelligence at Olney — the barber, the schoolmaster, and the drummer of a corps quartered at this place, that the belligerent powers are at last reconciled, the articles of the treaty adjusted, and that peace is at the door.

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I saw this morning, at nine o'clock, a group of about twelve figures very closely engaged in a conference, as I suppose, upon the same subject. The scene of consultation was a blacksmith's shed, very comfortably screened from the wind, and directly opposed to the morning sun. Some held their hands behind them, some had them folded across their bosom, and others had thrust them into their breeches pockets. Every man's posture bespoke a pacific turn of mind; but the distance being too great for their words to reach me, nothing transpired. I am willing, however, to hope that the secret will not be a secret long, and that you and I, equally interested in the event, though not, perhaps, equally well-informed, shall soon have an opportunity to rejoice in the completion of it. The powers of Europe have clashed with each other to a fine purpose; that the Americans, at length declared independent, may keep themselves so, if they can; and that what the parties, who have thought proper to dispute upon that point, have wrested from each other in the course of the conflict, may be, in the issue of it, restored to the proper owner. Nations may be guilty of a conduct that would render an individual infamous for ever; and yet carry their heads high, talk of their glory, and despise their neighbours. Your opinions and mine, I mean our political ones, are not exactly of a piece, yet I cannot think otherwise upon this subject than I have always done. England, more, perhaps, through the fault of her generals, than her councils, has in some instances acted with a spirit of cruel animosity she was never chargeable with till now. But this is the worst that can be said. On the other

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hand, the Americans, who, if they had contented themselves with a struggle for lawful liberty, would have deserved applause, seem to me to have incurred the guilt of parricide, by renouncing their parent, by making her ruin their favourite object, and by associating themselves with her worst enemy, for the accomplishment of their purpose. France, and of course Spain, have acted a treacherous, a thievish part. They have stolen America from England, and whether they are able to possess themselves of that jewel or not hereafter, it was doubtless what they intended. Holland appears to me in a meaner light than any of them. They quarrelled with a friend for an enemy's sake. The French led them by the nose, and the English have thrashed them for suffering it. My views of the contest being, and having been always such, I have consequently brighter hopes for England than her situation some time since seemed to justify. She is the only injured party. America may, perhaps, call her the aggressor; but if she were so, America has not only repelled the injury, but done a greater. As to the rest, if perfidy, treachery, avarice, and ambition, can prove their cause to have been a rotten one, those proofs are found upon them. I think, therefore, that whatever scourge may be prepared for England, on some future day, her ruin is not yet to be expected.

Acknowledge, now, that I am worthy of a place under the shed I described, and that I should make no small figure among the *quidnuncs* of Olney.

I wish the society you have formed may prosper. Your subjects will be of greater importance, and discussed with more sufficiency. The earth is a grain

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of sand, but the spiritual interests of man are commensurate with the heavens.

Pray remind Mr. Bull, who has too much genius to have a good memory, that he has an account to settle for Mrs. Unwin with her grocer, and give our love to him. Accept for yourself and Mrs. Newton your just share of the same commodity, with our united thanks for a very fine barrel of oysters. This, indeed, is rather commending the barrel than its contents. I should say, therefore, for a barrel of very fine oysters.

Yours, my dear friend, as ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 20, 1783.

My device was intended to represent not my own heart, but the heart of a Christian, mourning and yet rejoicing, pierced with thorns, yet wreathed about with roses. I have the thorn without the rose. My brier is a wintry one, the flowers are withered, but the thorn remains. My days are spent in vanity, and it is impossible for me to spend them otherwise. No man upon earth is more sensible of the unprofitableness of a life like mine, than I am, or groans more heavily under the burthen; but this too is vanity, because it is in vain; my groans will not bring the remedy, because there is no remedy for me. The time when I seem to be most rationally employed, is when I am reading. My studies, however, are very much confined, and of little use, because I have no books but what I borrow, and nobody will lend me a memory. My own is almost

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worn out. I read the Biographia and the Review. If all the readers of the former had memories like mine, the compilers of that work would in vain have laboured to rescue the great names of past ages from oblivion, for what I read to-day, I forget to-morrow. A by-stander might say, This is rather an advantage, the book is always new;—but I beg the by-stander's pardon; I can recollect though I cannot remember, and with the book in my hand I recognise those passages which, without the book, I should never have thought of more. The Review pleases me most, because, if the contents escape me, I regret them less, being a very supercilious reader of most modern writers. Either I dislike the subject, or the manner of treating it; the style is affected, or the matter is disgusting. Your namesake the Bishop of Bristol furnishes the principal article of the two last numbers, but (though he was a learned man, and sometimes wrote like a wise one,) I see him labouring under invincible prejudices against the truth and its professors; shrewd in his interpretations of prophecy, but heterodox in his opinions upon some religious subjects, and reasoning most weakly in support of them. How has he toiled to prove that the perdition of the wicked is not eternal, that there may be repentance in hell, and that the devils may be saved at last: thus establishing, as far as in him lies, the belief of a purgatory, and approaching nearer to the church of Rome than ever any Methodist did, though papalizing is the crime with which he charges all of that denomination. When I think of the poor Bishop, I think too of some who shall say hereafter, "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done

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many wondrous works? Then shall he say unto them, Depart from me, for I never knew you." But perhaps he might be enlightened in his last moments, and saved in the very article of dissolution. It is much to be wished, and indeed hoped, that he was. Such a man reprobated in the great day, would be the most melancholy spectacle of all that shall stand at the left hand hereafter. But I do not think that *many*, or indeed *any* will be found there, who in their lives were sober, virtuous, and sincere, truly pious in the use of their little light, and though ignorant of God, in comparison with some others, yet sufficiently informed to know that He is to be feared, loved, and trusted. An operation is often performed within the curtains of a dying bed, in behalf of such men, that the nurse and the doctor (I mean the doctor and the nurse) have no suspicion of. The soul makes but one step out of darkness into light, and makes that step without a witness. My brother's case has made me very charitable in my opinion about the future state of such men.

We wait with anxiety to be informed what news you receive from Scotland. Present our love, if you please, to Miss Cunningham. I saw in the Gentleman's Magazine for last month, an account of a physician who has discovered a new method of treating consumptive cases, which has succeeded wonderfully in the trial. He finds the seat of the distemper in the stomach, and cures it principally by emetics. The old method of encountering the disorder has proved so unequal to the task, that I should be much inclined to

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any new practice that came well recommended. He is spoken of as a sensible and judicious man, but his name I have forgot.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 20, 1783.

I HAVE nothing to say on political subjects, for two reasons; first, because I know none that at present would prove very amusing, especially to you who love your country; and, secondly, because there are none that I have the vanity to think myself qualified to discuss. I must beg leave, however, to rejoice a little at the failure of the Caisse d'Escomptes, because I think the French have well deserved it; and to mourn equally that the Royal George cannot be weighed: the rather, because I wrote two poems, one Latin and one English, to encourage the attempt. The former of these only having been published, which the sailors would understand but little of, may be the reason, perhaps, why they have not succeeded.

Believe me, my friend,

Affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 22, 1783.

I HAVE made a point of saying no fine things to Mr. Bacon, upon an occasion that would well have justified them; deterred by a *Caveat* he entered in his letter. Nothing can be more handsome than the present, nor more obliging than the manner in which he has made it. I take it for granted that the plate is, line for line, and stroke for stroke, an exact representation of his performance, as nearly at least, as light and shade can exhibit, upon a flat surface, the effect of a piece of statuary. I may be allowed therefore to say that I admire it. My situation affords me no opportunity to cultivate the science of connoisseurship; neither would there be much propriety in my speaking the language of one to you, who disclaim the character. But we both know when we are pleased. It occurs to me, however, that I ought to say what it is that pleases me, for a general commendation, where there are so many particular beauties, would be insipid and unjust.

I think the figure of Lord Chatham singularly graceful, and his countenance full of the character that belongs to him. It speaks not only great ability and consummate skill, but a tender and heartfelt interest in the welfare of the charge committed to him. In the figure of the City, there is all that *empressement* (pardon a French term, it expresses my idea better than any English one that occurs,) that the importance of her errand calls for; and it is noble in its air, though in a posture of supplication. But the figure of Com-

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merce is indeed a perfect beauty. It is a literal truth, that I felt the tears flush into my eyes while I looked at her. The idea of so much elegance and grace having found so powerful a protection, was irresistible. There is a complacency and serenity in the air and countenance of Britannia, more suited to her dignity than that exultation and triumph which a less judicious hand might have dressed her in. She seems happy to sit at the feet of her deliverer.—I have most of the monuments in the Abbey by heart, but I recollect none that ever gave me so much pleasure. The faces are all expressive, and the figures are all graceful.—If you think the opinion of so unlearned a spectator worth communicating, and that I have not said more than Mr. Bacon's modesty can bear without offence, you are welcome to make him privy to my sentiments. I know not why he should be hurt by just praise; his fine talent is a gift, and all the merit of it is His property who gave it.

We were sorry to be told by Mr. Jones that you are neither of you well, and heartily wish you may be able to tell us in your next that you are better. Our love to Mrs. Newton.

Believe me, my dear friend,
Sincerely and affectionately yours,
WM. COWPER.

I am out of your debt.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 17, 1783.

A PARCEL arrived last night, the contents of which shall be disposed of according to order. We thank Mrs. Newton (not from the teeth outwards) for the tooth-brushes.

The country around us is much alarmed with apprehensions of fire. Two have happened since that of Olney. One at Hitchin, where the damage is said to amount to eleven thousand pounds, and another, at a place not far from Hitchin, of which I have not learnt the name. Letters have been dropped at Bedford, threatening to burn the town; and the inhabitants have been so intimidated as to have placed a guard in many parts of it, several nights past. Some madman or some devil has broke loose, who it is to be hoped will pay dear for these effusions of his malignity. Since our conflagration here, we have sent two women and a boy to the justice, for depredation; Sue Riviss, for stealing a piece of beef, which, in her excuse, she said she intended to take care of. This lady, whom you well remember, escaped for want of evidence; not that evidence was indeed wanting, but our men of Gotham judged it unnecessary to send it. With her went the woman I mentioned before, who, it seems, has made some sort of profession, but upon this occasion allowed herself a latitude of conduct rather inconsistent with it, having filled her apron with wearing apparel, which she likewise intended to take care of. She would have gone to the county gaol, had Billy Raban, the baker's son, who prosecuted, insisted upon

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it; but he good-naturedly, though I think weakly, interposed in her favour, and begged her off. The young gentleman who accompanied these fair ones, is the junior son of Molly Boswell. He had stolen some iron-work, the property of Griggs, the butcher. Being convicted, he was ordered to be whipt, which operation he underwent at the cart's tail, from the stone-house to the high arch, and back again. He seemed to show great fortitude, but it was all an imposition upon the public. The beadle, who performed it, had filled his left hand with red ochre, through which, after every stroke, he drew the lash of his whip, leaving the appearance of a wound upon the skin, but in reality not hurting him at all. This being perceived by Mr. Constable Hinschcomb, who followed the beadle, he applied his cane, without any such management or precaution, to the shoulders of the too merciful executioner. The scene immediately became more interesting. The beadle could by no means be prevailed upon to strike hard, which provoked the constable to strike harder; and this double flogging continued, till a lass of Silver-end, pitying the pitiful beadle thus suffering under the hands of the pitiless constable, joined the procession, and placing herself immediately behind the latter, seized him by his capillary club, and pulling him backwards by the same, slapt his face with a most Amazonian fury. This concatenation of events has taken up more of my paper that I intended it should, but I could not forbear to inform you how the beadle threshed the thief, the constable the beadle, and the lady the constable, and how the thief was the only person concerned who suffered nothing. Mr. Tee-

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don has been here, and is gone again. He came to thank me for an old pair of breeches. In answer to our enquiries after his health, he replied that he had a slow fever, which made him take all possible care not to inflame his blood. I admitted his prudence, but in his particular instance, could not very clearly discern the need of it. Pump water will not heat him much; and, to speak a little in his own style, more inebriating fluids are to him, I fancy, not very attainable. He brought us news, the truth of which, however, I do not vouch for, that the town of Bedford was actually on fire yesterday, and the flames not extinguished when the bearer of the tidings left it.

Swift observes, when he is giving his reasons why the preacher is elevated always above his hearers, that let the crowd be as great as it will below, there is always room enough over-head. If the French philosophers can carry their art of flying to the perfection they desire, the observation may be reversed, the crowd will be over-head, and they will have most room who stay below. I can assure you, however, upon my own experience, that this way of travelling is very delightful. I dreamt, a night or two since, that I drove myself through the upper regions in a balloon and pair, with the greatest ease and security. Having finished the tour I intended, I made a short turn, and, with one flourish of my whip, descended; my horses prancing and curvetting with an infinite share of spirit, but without the least danger, either to me or my vehicle. The time, we may suppose, is at hand, and seems to be prognosticated by my dream, when these airy excursions will be universal, when judges will fly

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the circuit, and bishops their visitations; and when the tour of Europe will be performed with much greater speed, and with equal advantage, by all who travel merely for the sake of having it to say, that they have made it.

I beg you will accept for yourself and yours our unfeigned love, and remember me affectionately to Mr. Bacon, when you see him.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 23, 1783.

YOUR opinion of voyages and travels would spoil an appetite less keen than mine; but being pretty much, perhaps more than any man who can be said to enjoy his liberty, confined to a spot, and being very desirous of knowing all that can be known of this same planet of ours, while I have the honour to belong to it,—and having, besides, no other means of information at my command, I am constrained to be satisfied with narratives, not always, indeed, to be implicitly depended upon, but which, being subjected to the exercise of a little consideration, cannot materially deceive us. Swinburn's is a book I had fixed upon, and determined, if possible, to procure, being pleased with some extracts from it, which I found in the Review. I need hardly add that I shall be much obliged to Mrs. Hill for a sight of it. I account myself truly and much indebted to that lady for the trouble she is so kind as to take upon my account, and shall esteem myself her

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debtor for all the amusement I meet with, in the southern hemisphere, should I be so fortunate as to get there. My reading is pretty much circumscribed, both by want of books and the influence of particular reasons. Politics are my abhorrence, being almost always hypothetical, fluctuating, and impracticable. Philosophy—I should have said natural philosophy, mathematically studied, does not suit me; and such exhibitions of that subject, as are calculated for less learned readers, I have read in former days, and remember in the present. Poetry, English poetry, I never touch, being pretty much addicted to the writing of it, and knowing that much intercourse with those gentlemen betrays us unavoidably into a habit of imitation, which I hate and despise most cordially.

I am glad my uncle is so well, and that he found new beauties in so old an acquaintance as the scene at Hastings. My most affectionate respects to him, if you please, when you see him next.—If *he* be the happiest man, who has least money in the funds, there are few upon earth whom I have any occasion to envy. I would consent, however, to have my pounds multiplied into thousands, even at the hazard of all I might feel from that tormenting passion. I send nothing to the papers myself, but Unwin sometimes sends for me. His receptacle of my squibs is the Public Advertiser; but they are very few, and my present occupations are of a kind that will still have a tendency to make them fewer.

Yours, my dear friend,

W^M^. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 30, 1783.

I HAVE neither long visits to pay nor to receive, nor ladies to spend hours in telling me that which might be told in five minutes, yet often find myself obliged to be an economist of time, and to make the most of a short opportunity. Let our station be as retired as it may, there is no want of playthings and avocations, nor much need to seek them, in this world of ours. Business, or what presents itself to us, under that imposing character, will find us out, even in the stillest retreat, and plead its importance, however trivial in reality, as a just demand upon our attention. It is wonderful how by means of such real or seeming necessities, my time is stolen away. I have just time to observe that time is short, and by the time I have made the observation, time is gone. I have wondered in former days at the patience of the Antediluvian world; that they could endure a life almost millenary, with so little variety as seems to have fallen to their share. It is probable that they had much fewer employments than we. Their affairs lay in a narrower compass; their libraries were indifferently furnished; philosophical researches were carried on with much less industry and acuteness of penetration, and fiddles, perhaps, were not even invented. How then could seven or eight hundred years of life be supportable? I have asked this question formerly, and been at a loss to resolve it; but I think I can answer it now. I will suppose myself born a thousand years before Noah was born or thought of. I rise with the sun; I wor-

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ship; I prepare my breakfast; I swallow a bucket of goats' milk, and a dozen good sizeable cakes. I fasten a new string to my bow, and my youngest boy, a lad of about thirty years of age, having played with my arrows till he has stript off all the feathers, I find myself obliged to repair them. The morning is thus spent in preparing for the chace, and it is become necessary that I should dine. I dig up my roots; I wash them; I boil them; I find them not done enough, I boil them again; my wife is angry; we dispute; we settle the point; but in the mean time the fire goes out, and must be kindled again. All this is very amusing. I hunt; I bring home the prey; with the skin of it I mend an old coat, or I make a new one. By this time the day is far spent; I feel myself fatigued, and retire to rest. Thus what with tilling the ground and eating the fruit of it, hunting and walking, and running, and mending old clothes, and sleeping and rising again, I can suppose an inhabitant of the primæval world so much occupied, as to sigh over the shortness of life, and to find at the end of many centuries, that they had all slipt through his fingers, and were passed away like a shadow. What wonder then that I, who live in a day of so much greater refinement, when there is so much more to be wanted, and wished, and to be enjoyed, should feel myself now and then pinched in point of opportunity, and at some loss for leisure to fill four sides of a sheet like this? Thus, however, it is, and if the ancient gentlemen to whom I have referred, and their complaints of the disproportion of time to the occasions they had for it, will not serve me as an excuse, I must even plead guilty, and

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confess that I am often in haste, when I have no good reason for being so.

This by way of introduction; now for my letter. Mr. Scott is desired by Mr. De Coetlegon to contribute to the Theological Review, of which, I suppose, that gentleman is a manager. He says he has insured your assistance, and at the same time desires mine, either in prose or verse. He did well to apply to you, because you can afford him substantial help; but as for me, had he known me better, he would never have suspected me for a theologian, either in rhyme or otherwise.

Lord Dartmouth's Mr. Wright spent near two hours with me this morning; a respectable old man, whom I always see with pleasure, both for his master's sake and for his own. I was glad to learn from him that his lordship has better health than he has enjoyed for some years.

Believe me, my dear friend,
Your affectionate
WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 15, 1783.

I KNOW not how it fares with you, at a time when philosophy has just brought forth her most extraordinary production, not excepting, perhaps, that prodigy, a ship, in all respects complete, and equal to the task of circumnavigating the globe. My mind, however, is frequently getting into these balloons, and is busy in multiplying speculations as airy as the regions through

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which they pass. The last account from France, which seems so well authenticated, has changed my jocularity upon this occasion into serious expectation. The invention of these new vehicles is yet in its infancy, yet already they seem to have attained a degree of perfection which navigation did not reach, till ages of experience had matured it, and science had exhausted both her industry and her skill, in its improvement. I am aware, indeed, that the first boat or canoe that was ever formed, though rude in its construction—perhaps not constructed at all, being only a hollow tree that had fallen casually in the water, and which, though furnished with neither sails nor oars, might yet be guided by a pole—was a more perfect creature in its kind than a balloon at present; the single circumstance of its manageable nature giving it a clear superiority both in respect of safety and convenience. But the atmosphere, though a much thinner medium, we well know, resists the impression made upon it by the tail of a bird, as effectually as the water that of a ship's rudder. Pope, when inculcating one of his few useful lessons, and directing mankind to the providence of God as the true source of all their wisdom, says beautifully—

> Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,
> Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.

It is easy to parody these lines, so as to give them an accommodation and suitableness to the present purpose.

> Learn of the circle-making kite to fly,
> Spread the fan-tail, and wheel about the sky.

It is certain, at least, that nothing within the reach

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of human ingenuity will be left unattempted to accomplish, and add all that is wanting to this last effort of philosophical contrivance. The approximating powers of the telescope, and the powers by which the thunderstorm is delivered of its contents peaceably and without mischief, were once, perhaps, in appearance more remote from discovery, and seemed less practicable, than we may now suppose it, to give direction to that which is already buoyant; especially possessed as we are of such consummate mechanical skill, already masters of principles which we have nothing to do but to apply, of which we have already availed ourselves in the similar case of navigation, and having in every fowl of the air a pattern, which now at length it may be sufficient to imitate. Wings and a tail, indeed, were of little use, while the body, so much heavier than the space of air it occupied, was sure to sink by its own weight, and could never be held in equipoise by any implements of the kind which human strength could manage. But now we float; at random, indeed, pretty much, and as the wind drives us; for want of nothing, however, but that steerage which invention, the conqueror of many equal, if not superior difficulties, may be expected to supply.—Should the point be carried, and man at last become as familiar with the air as he has long been with the ocean, will it in its consequences prove a mercy, or a judgement? I think, a judgement. First, because if a power to convey himself from place to place, like a bird, would have been good for him, his Maker would have formed him with such a capacity. But he has been a groveller upon the earth for six thousand years, and now at last, when the close of this present

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state of things approaches, begins to exalt himself above it. So much the worse for *him*. Like a truant school-boy, he breaks his bounds, and will have reason to repent of his presumption.—Secondly, I think it will prove a judgement, because, with the exercise of very little foresight, it is easy to prognosticate a thousand evils which the project must necessarily bring after it; amounting at last to the confusion of all order, the annihilation of all authority, with dangers both to property and person, and impunity to the offenders. Were I an absolute legislator, I would therefore make it death for a man to be convicted of flying, the moment he could be caught; and to bring him down from his altitudes by a bullet sent through his head or his carriage, should be no murder. Philosophers would call me a Vandal; the scholar would say that, had it not been for me, the fable of Dædalus would have been realized; and historians would load my memory with reproaches of phlegm, and stupidity, and oppression; but in the mean time the world would go on quietly, and if it enjoyed less liberty, would at least be more secure.

I know not what are your sentiments upon the subject of the East India Bill. This, too, has frequently afforded me matter of speculation. I can easily see that it is not without its blemishes; but its beauties, in my eye, are much predominant. Whatever may be its author's views, if he delivers so large a portion of mankind from such horrible tyranny as the East has so long suffered, he deserves a statue much more than Mongolfier, who, it seems, is to receive that honour. Perhaps he may bring our own freedom into

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jeopardy; but to do this for the sake of emancipating nations so much more numerous than ourselves, is at least generous, and a design that should have my encouragement, if I had any encouragement to afford it.

We are well, and love you. Remember us, as I doubt not you do, with the same affection, and be content with my sentiments upon subjects such as these, till I can send you, if that day should ever come, a letter more worthy of your reception.

Nous sommes les vôtres,

GUILLAUME ET MARIE.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 27, 1783.

THANKS to the patriotic junto, whose efforts have staved off the expected dissolution, franks have not yet lost their currency. Ignorant as they were that my writing by this post depended upon the existence of the present parliament, they have conducted their deliberations with a sturdiness and magnanimity that would almost tempt one to suppose that they had known it. So true it is, that the actions of men are connected with consequences they are little aware of; and that events, comparatively trivial in themselves, may give birth to the most important.

My thoughts of ministers and men in power are nearly akin to yours. It is well for the public, when the rulers of a state are actuated by principles that may happen to coincide with its interests. The ambition

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of an individual has often been made subservient to the general good; and many a man has served his country, merely for the sake of immortalizing himself by doing it. So far, it seems to me, the natural man is to be trusted, and no farther. Self is at the bottom of all his conduct. If self can be pleased, flattered, enriched, exalted by his exertions, and his talents are such as qualify him for great usefulness, his country shall be the better for him. And this, perhaps, is all the patriotism we have a right to look for. In the mean time, however, I cannot but think such a man in some degree a respectable character, and am willing, at least, to do him honour, so far as I feel myself benefited by him. Ambition and the love of fame are certainly no Christian principles, but they are such as commonly belong to men of superior minds, and the fruits they produce may often plead their apology. The great men of the world are of a piece with the world to which they belong; they are raised up to govern it, and in the government of it are prompted by worldly motives: but it prospers, perhaps, under their management; and when it does, the Christian world, which is totally a distinct creation, partaking of the advantage, has cause to be thankful. The sun is a glorious creature; he does much good, but without intending it. I, however, who am conscious of the good he does, though I know not what religion he is of, or whether he has any or none, rejoice in his effects, admire him, and am sensible that it is every man's duty to be thankful for him. In this sentiment I know you agree with me, for I believe he has not a warmer votary than yourself.

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We say, the king can do no wrong; and it is well for poor George the Third that he cannot. In my opinion, however, he has lately been within a hair's-breadth of that predicament. His advisers, indeed, are guilty, and not he: but he will probably find, however hard it may seem, that if he can do no wrong he may yet suffer the consequences of the wrong he cannot do. He has dismissed his servants but not disgraced them; they triumph in their degradation, and no man is wiling to supply their places. Must their offices remain unoccupied, or must they be courted to resume them? Never was such a distracted state of things within my remembrance; and I much fear that this is but the beginning of sorrows. It is not a time of day for a king to take liberties with the people: there is a spirit in the Commons that will not endure it; and his Majesty's advisers must be less acquainted with the temper of the times than it is possible to suppose them, if they imagine that such strides of prerogative will not be resented. The address will gall him. I am sorry that he has exposed himself to such a reprehension, but I think it warranted by the occasion. I pity him; but king as he is, and much as I have always honoured him, had I been a member I should have voted for it.

I am obliged to Mr. Bacon for thinking of me. That expression, however, does not do justice to my feelings. Even with the little knowledge I have of him, I should love him, had I no reason to suppose myself at any time an object of his attention; but knowing that I am so happy as to have a share in his remembrance, I certainly love him the more. Truly

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I am not in his debt: I cannot say wherefore it is so, but certainly few days pass in which I do not remember *him*. The print, indeed, with which he favoured me, and which is always in my view, must often suggest the recollection of him; but though I greatly value it, I do not believe it is my only prompter.

I finish with what I wish may make you laugh, as it did me. Mr. Scott, exhorting the people to frequent prayer, closed his address thus:—"You have nothing to do but to ask, and you will ever find Him ready to bestow. Open your wide mouths, and he will fill them."

Mrs. Unwin is well. Accept an old but a true conclusion—our united love to you and yours, and believe me, my dear friend,

Your ever affectionate

WM. COWPER.

TO MRS. HILL.

DEAR MADAM, Jan. 5, 1784.

You will readily pardon the trouble I give you by this line, when I plead my attention to your husband's convenience in my excuse. I know him to be so busy a man, that I cannot in conscience trouble him with a commission, which I know it is impossible he should have leisure to execute. After all, the labour would devolve upon you, and therefore I may as well address you in the first instance.

I have read, and return the books you were so kind as to procure for me. Mr. Hill gave me hopes, in his last, that from the library, to which I have subscribed,

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I might still be supplied with more. I have not many more to wish for, nor do I mean to make any unreasonable use of your kindness. In about a fortnight I shall be favoured, by a friend in Essex, with as many as will serve me during the rest of the winter. In summer I read but little. In the mean time I shall be much obliged to you for Forster's Narrative of the same Voyage, if your librarian has it; and likewise for Swinburn's Travels, which Mr. Hill mentioned. If they can be sent at once, which perhaps the terms of subscription may not allow, I shall be glad to receive them so. If not, then Forster's first, and Swinburn afterwards: and Swinburn, at any rate, if Forster is not to be procured.

Reading over what I have written, I find it perfectly free and easy; so much indeed in that stile, that, had I not had repeated proofs of your good-nature in other instances, I should have modesty enough to suppress it, and attempt something more civil, and becoming a person who has never had the happiness of seeing you. But I have always observed, that sensible people are best pleased with what is natural and unaffected. Nor can I tell you a plainer truth, than that I am, without the least dissimulation, and with a warm remembrance of past favours,

My dear Madam,
Your affectionate humble servant,
WM. COWPER.

I beg to be remembered to Mr. Hill.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 8, 1784.

I WISH you had more leisure, that you might oftener favour me with a page of politics. The authority of a newspaper is not of sufficient weight to determine my opinions, and I have no other documents to be set down by. I, therefore, on this subject, am suspended in a state of constant scepticism, the most uneasy condition in which the judgement can find itself. But *your* politics have weight with me, because I know your independent spirit, the justness of your reasonings, and the opportunities you have of information. But I know likewise the urgency and the multiplicity of your concerns; and, therefore, like a neglected clock, must be contented to go wrong, except when, perhaps twice in the year, you shall come to set me right.

Public credit is indeed shaken, and the funds at a low ebb. How can they be otherwise, when our western wing is already clipt to the stump, and the shears, at this moment, threaten our eastern. Low, however, as our public stock is, it is not lower than my private one; and this being the article that touches me most nearly, at present, I shall be obliged to you, if you will have recourse to such ways and means for the replenishment of my exchequer, as your wisdom may suggest, and your best ability suffice to execute. The experience I have had of your readiness upon all similar occasions, has been very agreeable to me; and I doubt not but upon the present I shall find you equally prompt to serve me. So,

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

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TO MR. JOHNSON.

SIR, Cambridge, Feb. 19, 1784.

If you have Albinus' "Complete System of the Blood Vessels," and his Anatomical Tables, beg you will send me a copy of each in sheets. As soon as I know the price shall remit the money.

I am, Sir, &c.

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 10, 1784.

We rejoice in the account you give us of Dr. Johnson. His conversion will indeed be a singular proof of the omnipotence of Grace; and the more singular, the more decided. The world will set his age against his wisdom, and comfort itself with the thought that he must be superannuated. Perhaps, therefore, in order to refute the slander, and do honour to the cause to which he becomes a convert, he could not do better than devote his great abilities, and a considerable part of the remainder of his years, to the production of some important work not immediately connected with the interests of religion. He would thus give proof, that a man of profound learning, and the best sense, may become a child without being a fool; and that to embrace the gospel, is no evidence either of enthusiasm, infirmity, or insanity. But He who calls him will direct him.

On Friday, by particular invitation, we attended an attempt to throw off a balloon at Mr. Throckmorton's,

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but it did not succeed. We expect, however, to be summoned again in the course of the ensuing week. Mrs. Unwin and I were the party. We were entertained with the utmost politeness. It is not possible to conceive a more engaging and agreeable character than the Gentleman's, or a more consummate assemblage of all that is called good-nature, complaisance, and innocent cheerfulness, than is to be seen in the Lady. They have lately received many gross affronts from the people of this place, on account of their religion. We thought it, therefore, the more necessary to treat them with respect.

Best love, and best wishes,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 21, 1784.

We are much pleased with your designed improvement of the late preposterous celebrity, and have no doubt that, in good hands, the foolish occasion will turn to good account. A religious service, instituted in honour of a musician, and performed in the house of God, is a subject that calls loudly for the animadversion of an enlightened minister; and would be no mean one for a satirist, could a poet of that description be found spiritual enough to feel and resent the profanation. It is reasonable to suppose, that in the next year's almanack we shall find the name of Handel among the red-lettered worthies, for it would surely puzzle the Pope to add any thing to his canonization.

This unpleasant summer makes me wish for winter.

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The gloominess of that season is the less felt, both because it is expected, and because the days are short. But such weather, when the days are longest, makes a double winter, and my spirits feel that it does. We have now frosty mornings, and so cold a wind, that even at high noon we have been obliged to break off our walk in the southern side of the garden, and seek shelter, I in the green-house, and Mrs. Unwin by the fire-side. Hay-making begins here to-morrow, and would have begun here sooner, had the weather permitted it.

Mr. Wright called upon us last Sunday. The old gentleman seems happy in being exempted from the effects of time, to such a degree, that, though we meet but once in the year, I cannot perceive that the twelve months that have elapsed have made any change in him. It seems, however, that as much as he loves his master, and as easy as I suppose he has always found his service, he now and then heaves a sigh for liberty, and wishes to taste it before he dies. But his wife is not so minded. She cannot leave a family, the sons and daughters of which seem all to be her own. Her brother died lately in the East Indies, leaving twenty thousand pounds behind him, and half of it to her; but the ship that was bringing home this treasure, is supposed to be lost. Her husband appears perfectly unaffected by the misfortune, and she, perhaps, may even be glad of it. Such an acquisition would have forced her into a state of independence, and have made her her own mistress, whether she would or not. I charged him with a petition to Lord Dartmouth, to send me Cook's last Voyage, which I have a great

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curiosity to see, and no other means of procuring. I dare say I shall obtain the favour, and have great pleasure in taking my last trip with a voyager whose memory I respect so much. Farewell, my dear friend: our affectionate remembrances are faithful to you and yours.

W^M. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 4, 1784.

You have my hearty thanks for a very good barrel of oysters; which necessary acknowledgment once made, I might perhaps show more kindness by cutting short an epistle, than by continuing one, in which you are not likely to find your account, either in the way of information or amusement. The season of the year, indeed, is not very friendly to such communications. A damp atmosphere and a sunless sky will have their effect upon the spirits; and when the spirits are checked, farewell to all hope of being good company, either by letter or otherwise. I envy those happy voyagers, who, with so much ease, ascend to regions unsullied with a cloud, and date their epistles from an extra-mundane situation. No wonder if they outshine us who poke about in the dark below, in the vivacity of their sallies, as much as they soar above us in their excursions. Not but that I should be very sorry to go to the clouds for wit: on the contrary, I am satisfied that I discover more by continuing where I am. Every man to his business. Their vocation is, to see fine prospects, and to make pithy observations upon

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the world below; such as these, for instance: that the earth, beheld from a height that one trembles to think of, has the appearance of a circular plain; that England is a very rich and cultivated country, in which every man's property is ascertained by the hedges that intersect the lands; and that London and Westminster, seen from the neighbourhood of the moon, make but an insignificant figure. I admit the utility of these remarks; but in the mean time, as I say, *chacun à son goût;* and mine is rather to creep than fly; and to carry with me, if possible, an unbroken neck to the grave.

I remain, as ever,
Your affectionate
WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Jan. 5, 1785.

* * * * * * * * *

I have observed, and you must have had occasion to observe it oftener than I, that when a man, who once seemed to be a Christian, has put off that character, and resumed his old one, he loses, together with the grace which he seemed to possess, the most amiable part of the character that he resumes. The best features of his natural face seem to be struck out, that, after having worn religion only as a handsome mask, he may make a more disgusting appearance than he did before he assumed it.

According to your request, I subjoin my Epitaph on Dr. Johnson; at least I mean to do it, if a drum,

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which at this moment announces the arrival of a giant in the town, will give me leave. I have not yet sent the copy to the Magazine.

EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON.

Here Johnson lies—a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud;
Whose prose was eloquence by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song;
Who many a noble gift from Heaven possessed,
And faith at last—alone worth all the rest.
Oh man immortal by a double prize,
On earth by fame, by favour in the skies!

Mr. Page has quitted the country, having neither left admirers behind him, nor taken any with him; unless perhaps his wife be one, which admits some doubt. He quarrelled with most of his acquaintance, and the rest grew sick of him. Even his friend Maurice Smith was of this number. He even quarrelled with his auctioneer in the midst of the sale of his goods, and would not permit him to proceed, finishing that matter himself. He took leave of his audience in these words; "And now let us pray for your wicked Vicar."

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 22, 1785.

THE departure of the long frost, by which we were pinched and squeezed together for three weeks, is a most agreeable circumstance. The weather is now (to speak poetically) genial and jocund; and the appearance of the sun, after so tedious an eclipse, peculiarly welcome. For were it not that I have a gravel-walk about sixty yards long, where I take my daily exercise, I should be obliged to look at a fine day through the window, without any other enjoyment of it;—a country rendered impassable by frost, that has been at last resolved into rottenness, keeps me so close a prisoner. Long live the inventors and improvers of balloons! It is always clear overhead, and by and by we shall use no other road.

How will the Parliament employ themselves when they meet?—to any purpose, or to none, or only to a bad one? They are utterly out of my favour. I despair of them altogether. Will they pass an act for the cultivation of the royal wildernesses? Will they make effectual provision for a northern fishery? Will they establish a new sinking-fund, that shall infallibly pay off the national debt? I say nothing about a more equal representation, because, unless they bestow upon private gentlemen of no property a privilege of voting, I stand no chance of ever being represented myself. Will they achieve all these wonders, or none of them? And shall I derive no other advantage from the great Wittena-Gemot of the nation, than merely to read their

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debates, for twenty folios of which I would not give one farthing?

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, Feb. 19, 1785.

I AM obliged to you for apprising me of the various occasions of delay to which your letters are liable. Furnished with such a key, I shall be able to account for any accidental tardiness, without supposing any thing worse than that you yourself have been interrupted, or that your messenger has not been punctual.

Mr. Teedon has just left us. He came to exhibit to us a specimen of his kinsman's skill in the art of bookbinding. The book on which he had exercised his ingenuity was your Life. You did not, indeed, make a very splendid appearance; but, considering that you were dressed by an untaught artificer, and that it was his first attempt, you had no cause to be dissatisfied. The young man has evidently the possession of talents, by which he might shine both for the benefit of others and for his own, did not his situation smother him. He can make a dulcimer, tune it, play upon it, and with common advantages would undoubtedly have been able to make an harpsichord. But, unfortunately, he lives where neither the one nor the other are at all in vogue. He can convert the shell of a cocoa-nut into a decent drinking-cup; but when he has done, he must either fill it at the pump, or use it merely as an

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ornament of his own mantle-tree. In like manner, he can bind a book; but if he would have books to bind, he must either make them or buy them, for we have few or no literati at Olney. Some men have talents with which they do mischief; and others have talents with which, if they do no mischief to others, at least they can do but little good to themselves. They are, however, always a blessing, unless by our own folly we make them a curse; for if we cannot turn them to a lucrative account, they may however furnish us, at many a dull season, with the means of innocent amusement. Such is the use that Mr. Killingworth makes of his; and this evening we have, I think, made him happy, having furnished him with two octavo volumes, in which the principles and practice of all ingenious arts are inculcated and explained. I make little doubt that, by the half of it, he will in time be able to perform many feats, for which he will never be one farthing the richer, but by which, nevertheless, himself and his kin will be much diverted.

How much better is he employed than a neighbour of ours has been for many years, whose sole occupation, although he too is naturally ingenious, has centred in filling his glass and emptying it. He is neither unknown nor much known to you, but you remember him by the name of Geary Ball. He is now languishing in a dropsy, and, in the prime of life, labouring under all the infirmities of age. He solaces himself, I am told, with the recollection of somewhat that passed in his experience many years ago, which, although it has been followed by no better fruits than

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will grow at an alehouse, he dignifies with the name of Conversion. Sows are so converted when they are washed, and give the same evidence of an unchanged nature by returning to the mire. Mr. Perry, whose daughter he married, often visits him, but declares, that of all the insensibles he ever saw, poor Geary is the most completely stupid. So long as he was able to crawl into the street, his journey was to the Royal Oak and home again; and so punctual were we both, I in cleaning my teeth at my window, and he in drinking his dram at the same time, that I seldom failed to observe him. But both his legs are now blistered, and refuse to assist him in poisoning himself any longer.

Osborn, the Baptist, as Mr. Wilson informed me, had determined to pay William Penn an official visit as a deacon of the church, for the purpose of imparting to him the sentence of his expulsion, but meeting him accidentally in the street, and discerning both in his gait and in his features, indications of a temper that it might not be safe to irritate, abandoned his purpose for ever. These men both have wives, and neither of them believes the sin and folly of their husbands.

The winter returning upon us at this late season with redoubled severity, is an event unpleasant even to us who are well furnished with fuel, and seldom feel much of it, unless when we step into bed or get out of it; but how much more formidable to the poor! When ministers talk of resources, that word never fails to send my imagination into the mud-wall cottages of our poor at Olney. There I find assembled in one individual, the miseries of age, sickness, and the extremest

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penury. We have many such instances around us. The parish, perhaps, allows such a one a shilling a week; but, being numbed with cold, and crippled by disease, she cannot possibly earn herself another. Such persons, therefore, suffer all that famine can inflict upon them, only that they are not actually starved; a catastrophe which, to many of them, I suppose, would prove a happy release. One cause of all this misery is, the exorbitant taxation with which the country is encumbered; so that, to the poor, the few pence they are able to procure have almost lost their value. Yet the budget will be opened soon, and soon we shall hear of resources. But I could conduct the statesman, who rolls down to the House in a chariot as splendid as that of Phaeton, into scenes that, if he had any sensibility for the woes of others, would make him tremble at the mention of the word.—This, however, is not what I intended when I began this paragraph. I was going to observe, that of all the winters we have passed at Olney, and this is the seventeenth, the present has confined us most. Thrice, and but thrice, since the middle of October, have we escaped into the fields for a little fresh air, and a little change of motion. The last time, indeed, it was at some peril that we did it, Mrs. Unwin having slipped into a ditch, and, though I performed the part of an active 'squire upon the occasion, escaped out of it upon her hands and knees.

If the town afford any other news than I here send you, it has not reached me yet. I am in perfect health, at least of body, and Mrs. Unwin is tolerably well. Adieu! We remember you always, you and

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yours, with as much affection as you can desire; which being said, and said truly, leaves me quite at a loss for any other conclusion than that of

Wm. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 27, 1785.

I WRITE merely to inquire after your health, and with a sincere desire to hear that you are better. Horace somewhere advises his friend to give his client the slip, and come and spend the evening with him. I am not so inconsiderate as to recommend the same measure to you, because we are not such very near neighbours as a trip of that sort requires that we should be. But I do verily wish that you would favour me with just five minutes of the time that properly belongs to your clients, and place it to my account. Employ it, I mean, in telling me that you are better at least, if not recovered.

I have been pretty much indisposed myself since I wrote last; but, except in point of strength, am now as well as before. My disorder was what is commonly called and best understood by the name of a thorough cold; which, being interpreted, no doubt you will know, signifies shiverings, aches, burnings, lassitude, together with many other ills that flesh is heir to. James's powder is my nostrum on all such occasions, and never fails.

Yours, my dear friend,

Wm. COWPER.

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TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 19, 1785.

YOU will wonder, no doubt, when I tell you that I write upon a card-table; and will be still more surprised when I add, that we breakfast, dine, sup, upon a card-table. In short, it serves all purposes, except the only one for which it was originally designed. The solution of this mystery shall follow, lest it should run in your head at a wrong time, and should puzzle you, perhaps, when you are on the point of ascending your pulpit: for I have heard you say, that at such seasons your mind is often troubled with impertinent intrusions. The round table, which we formerly had in use, was unequal to the pressure of my superincumbent breast and elbows. When I wrote upon it, it creaked and tilted, and, by a variety of inconvenient tricks, disturbed the process. The fly-table was too slight and too small; the square dining-table, too heavy and too large, occupying, when its leaves were spread, almost the whole parlour; and the sideboard-table, having its station at too great a distance from the fire, and not being easily shifted out of its place and into it again, by reason of its size, was equally unfit for my purpose. The card-table, therefore, which had for sixteen years been banished as mere lumber; the card-table, which is covered with green baize, and is, therefore, preferable to any other that has a slippery surface; the card-table, that stands firm and never totters,—is advanced to the honour of assisting me upon my scribbling occasions; and, because we choose to avoid the trouble of making

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frequent changes in the position of our household furniture, proves equally serviceable upon all others. It has cost us now and then the downfall of a glass: for, when covered with a table-cloth, the fish-ponds are not easily discerned; and not being seen, are sometimes as little thought of. But having numerous good qualities which abundantly compensate that single inconvenience, we spill upon it our coffee, our wine, and our ale, without murmuring, and resolve that it shall be our table still, to the exclusion of all others. Not to be tedious, I will add but one more circumstance upon the subject, and that only because it will impress upon you, as much as any thing that I have said, a sense of the value we set upon its escritorial capacity.—Parched and penetrated on one side by the heat of the fire, it has opened into a large fissure, which pervades not the moulding of it only, but the very substance of the plank. At the mouth of this aperture, a sharp splinter presents itself, which, as sure as it comes in contact with a gown or an apron, tears it. It happens, unfortunately, to be on that side of this excellent and never-to-be-forgotten table which Mrs. Unwin sweeps with her apparel, almost as often as she rises from her chair. The consequences need not, to use the fashionable phrase, be given in detail: but the needle sets all to rights; and the card-table still holds possession of its functions without a rival.

Clean roads and milder weather have once more released us, opening a way for our escape into our accustomed walks. We have both, I believe, been sufferers by such a long confinement. Mrs. Unwin has had a nervous fever all the winter, and I a sto-

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mach that has quarrelled with every thing, and not seldom even with its bread and butter. Her complaint, I hope, is at length removed; but mine seems more obstinate, giving way to nothing that I can oppose to it, except just in the moment when the opposition is made. I ascribe this malady—both our maladies, indeed—in a great measure, to our want of exercise. We have each of us practised more, in other days, than lately we have been able to take; and for my own part, till I was more than thirty years old, it was almost essential to my comfort to be perpetually in motion. My constitution, therefore, misses, I doubt not, its usual aids of this kind; and unless, for purposes which I cannot foresee, Providence should interpose to prevent it, will probably reach the moment of its dissolution the sooner for being so little disturbed. A vitiated digestion, I believe, always terminates, if not cured, in the production of some chronical disorder. In several I have known it produce a dropsy. But no matter. Death is inevitable; and whether we die to-day or to-morrow, a watery death or a dry one, is of no consequence. The state of our spiritual health is all. Could I discover a few more symptoms of convalescence there, this body might moulder into its original dust without one sigh from me. Nothing of all this did I mean to say; but I have said it, and must now seek another subject.

One of our most favourite walks is spoiled. The spinney is cut down to the stumps: even the lilacs and the syringas, to the stumps. Little did I think, (though indeed I might have thought it,) that the trees which skreened me from the sun last summer

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would this winter be employed in roasting potatoes and boiling tea-kettles for the poor of Olney. But so it has proved: and we ourselves have, at this moment, more than two waggon loads of them in our wood-loft.

> Such various services can trees perform;
> Whom once they skreen'd from heat, in time they warm.

The mention of the poor reminds me of saying, in answer to your application in behalf of the Freemans, that they long since received a portion of their nameless benefactor's annual remittance. Mrs. Unwin sent them more than twelve pounds of beef, and two gallon loaves.

A letter from Manchester reached our town last Sunday, addressed to the Mayor or other chief magistrate of Olney. The purport of it was, to excite him and his neighbours to petition Parliament against the concessions to Ireland that Government has in contemplation. Mr. Maurice Smith, as constable, took the letter. But whether that most respectable personage amongst us intends to comply with the terms of it, or not, I am ignorant. For myself, however, I can pretty well answer, that I shall sign no petition of the sort; both because I do not think myself competent to a right understanding of the question, and because it appears to me, that, whatever be the event, no place in England can be less concerned in it than Olney.

We rejoice that you are all well. Our love attends Mrs. Newton and yourself, and the young ladies.

I am yours, my dear friend, as usual,

WM. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 9, 1785.

In a letter to the printer of the Northampton Mercury, we have the following history.—An ecclesiastic of the name of Zichen, German superintendant or Lutheran bishop of Zetterfeldt, in the year 1779 delivered to the Courts of Hanover and Brunswick a prediction to the following purport. That an earthquake is at hand, the greatest and most destructive ever known; that it will originate in the Alps and in their neighbourhood, especially at Mount St. Gothard; at the foot of which mountain, it seems, four rivers have their source, of which the Rhine is one. The names of the rest I have forgotten. They are all to be swallowed up. That the earth will open into an immense fissure, which will divide all Europe, reaching from the aforesaid mountain to the states of Holland; that the Zuyder Sea will be absorbed in the gulf; that the Bristol Channel will be no more: in short, that the North of Europe will be separated from the South, and that seven thousand cities, towns, and villages, will be destroyed. This prediction he delivered at the aforesaid Courts, in the year seventy-nine, asserting, that in February following the commotion would begin, and that by Easter 1786, the whole would be accomplished. Accordingly, between the fifteenth and twenty-seventh of February, in the year eighty, the public gazettes and newspapers took notice of several earthquakes in the Alps, and in the regions at their foot; particularly about Mount St. Gothard. From this partial fulfilment, Mr. Okely argues the

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probability of a complete one, and exhorts the world to watch and be prepared. He adds, moreover, that Mr. Zichen was a pious man, a man of science, and a man of sense; and that when he gave in his writing, he offered to swear to it—I suppose, as a revelation from above. He is since dead.

Nothing in the whole affair pleases me so much, as that he has named a short day for the completion of his prophecy. It is tedious work to hold the judgement in suspense for many years; but any body, methinks, may wait with patience till a twelvemonth shall pass away, especially when an earthquake of such magnitude is in question. I do not say that Mr. Zichen is deceived; but if he be not, I will say that he is the first modern prophet who has not both been a subject of deception himself, and a deceiver of others. A year will show.

Mrs. Unwin thanks Mrs. Newton for her letter. We hope that Patty has been falsely accused. But, however that may be, we see great cause to admire either the cogency of her arguments, or her husband's openness to conviction, who, by a single box on the ear, was so effectually assured of the innocence of his wife, as to become more attached to her than ever. For the sake of good husbands, it is to be hoped that she will keep her nostrum a secret, or communicate it only to ladies in her own predicament, who have need of the most forcible proofs of their integrity.

Our love attends all your family.

Believe me, my dear friend,

affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May, 1785.

I DO not know that I shall send you news; but, whether it be news or not, it is necessary that I should relate the fact, lest I should omit an article of intelligence important at least at Olney. The event took place much nearer to you than to us, and yet it is possible that no account of it may yet have reached you.—Mr. Ashburner, the elder, went to London on Tuesday se'nnight in perfect health and in high spirits, so as to be remarkably cheerful; and was brought home in a hearse the Friday following. Soon after his arrival in town, he complained of an acute pain in his elbow, then in his shoulder, then in both shoulders; was blooded; took two doses of such medicine as an apothecary thought might do him good; and died on Thursday, in the morning, at ten o'clock. When I first heard the tidings, I could hardly credit them; and yet have lived long enough myself to have seen manifold and most convincing proofs, that neither health, great strength, nor even youth itself, afford the least security from the stroke of death. It is not common, however, for men at the age of thirty-six to die so suddenly. I saw him but a few days before, with a bundle of gloves and hatbands under his arm, at the door of Geary Ball, who lay at that time a corpse. The following day, I saw him march before the coffin, and lead the procession that attended Geary to the grave. He might be truly said to march, for his step was heroic, his figure athletic, and his countenance as firm and confident as if he had been born

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only to bury others, and was sure never to be buried himself. Such he appeared to me, while I stood at the window and contemplated his deportment; and then he died.

I am sensible of the tenderness and affectionate kindness with which you recollect our past intercourse, and express your hopes of my future restoration. I, too, within the last eight months, have had my hopes, though they have been of short duration; cut off, like the foam upon the waters. Some previous adjustments, indeed, are necessary, before a lasting expectation of comfort can have place in me. There are those persuasions in my mind which either entirely forbid the entrance of hope, or, if it enter, immediately eject it. They are incompatible with any such inmate, and must be turned out themselves before so desirable a guest can possibly have secure possession. This, you say, will be done. It may be, but it is not done yet; nor has a single step in the course of God's dealings with me been taken towards it. If I mend, no creature ever mended so slowly that recovered at last. I am like a slug or snail, that has fallen into a deep well: slug as he is, he performs his descent with an alacrity proportioned to his weight; but he does not crawl up again quite so fast. Mine was a rapid plunge; but my return to daylight, if I am indeed returning, is leisurely enough.—I wish you a swift progress, and a pleasant one, through the great subject that you have in hand; and set that value upon your letters to which they are in themselves entitled, but which is certainly encreased by that peculiar attention which the writer

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of them pays to me. Were I such as I once was, I should say that I have a claim upon your particular notice which nothing ought to supersede. Most of your other connexions you may fairly be said to have formed by your own act; but your connexion with me was the work of God. The kine that went up with the ark from Bethshemesh left what they loved behind them, in obedience to an impression which to them was perfectly dark and unintelligible. Your journey to Huntingdon was not less wonderful. He, indeed, who sent you, knew well wherefore, but you knew not. That dispensation, therefore, would furnish me, as long as we can both remember it, with a plea for some distinction at your hands, had I occasion to use and urge it, which I have not. But I am altered since that time; and if your affection for me had ceased, you might very reasonably justify your change by mine. I can say nothing for myself at present; but this I can venture to foretell, that should the restoration of which my friends assure me obtain, I shall undoubtedly love those who have continued to love me, even in a state of transformation from my former self, much more than ever. I doubt not that Nebuchadnezzar had friends in his prosperity; all kings have many. But when his nails became like eagles' claws, and he ate grass like an ox, I suppose he had few to pity him.

* * * * * * *

I am glad that Johnson is in fact a civiller man than I supposed him. My quarrel with him was not for any stricture of his upon my poetry, (for he has made several, and many of them have been judicious, and

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my work will be the better for them,) but for a certain rudeness with which he questioned my judgement of a writer of the last century, though I only mention the effect that his verses had upon me when a boy. There certainly was at the time a bustle in his temper, occasioned, I imagine, by my being a little importunate with him to proceed. He has however recovered himself since; and, except that the press seems to have stood still this last week, has printed as fast as I could wish. Had he kept the same pace from the beginning, the book had been published, as indeed it ought to have been, three months ago. That evil report of his indolence reaches me from every body that knows him, and is so general, that had I a work, or the publication of one in hand, the expenses of which I intended to take the hazard of upon myself, I should be very much afraid to employ him. He who will neglect himself cannot well be expected to attend to the interests of another.

We are going to pay Mr. Pomfret a morning visit. Our errand is to see a fine bed of tulips, a sight that I never saw. Fine painting, and God the artist.—Mrs. Unwin has something to say in the cover. I leave her therefore to make her own courtesy, and only add that I am yours and Mrs. Newton's

Affectionate

W^M. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 25, 1785.

A NOTE that we received from Mr. Scott, by your desire, informing us of the amendment of Mrs. Newton's health, demands our thanks, having relieved us from no little anxiety upon her account. The welcome purport of it was soon after confirmed by Sally Johnson, so that, at present, we feel ourselves at liberty to hope that by this time Mrs. Newton's recovery is complete. Sally's looks do credit to the air of Hoxton. She seems to have lost nothing, either in complexion or dimensions, by her removal hence; and, which is still more to the credit of your great town, she seems in spiritual things also, to be the very same Sally whom we knew once at Olney. Situation, therefore, is nothing. They who have the means of grace, and a heart to use them, will thrive any where; others no where. More than a few, who were formerly ornaments of this garden which you once watered, here flourished, and here have seemed to wither. Others, transplanted into a soil apparently less favourable to their growth, either find the exchange an advantage, or at least are not impaired by it. Of myself, who had once both leaves and fruit, but who have now neither, I say nothing; or only this,—That when I am overwhelmed with despair, I repine at my barrenness, and think it hard to be thus blighted; but when a glimpse of hope breaks in upon me, I am contented to be the sapless thing I am, knowing that He who has commanded me to wither, can command me to flourish again, when

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he pleases. My experiences, however, of this latter kind, are rare and transient. The light that reaches me cannot be compared either to that of the sun or of the moon. It is a flash in a dark night, during which the heavens seem opened only to shut again.

We enquired, but could not learn, that any thing memorable passed in the last moments of poor Nathan. I listened in expectation that he would at least acknowledge what all who knew him in his more lively days had so long seen and lamented, his neglect of the best things, and his eager pursuit of riches. But he was totally silent upon that subject. Yet it was evident that the cares of this world had choked in him much of the good seed, and that he was no longer the Nathan whom we have so often heard at the old house, rich in spirit, though poor in expression; whose desires were unutterable in every sense, both because they were too big for language, and because Nathan had no language for them. I believe with you, however, that he is safe at home. He had a weak head and strong passions, which He who made him well knew, and for which He would undoubtedly make great allowance. The forgiveness of God is large and absolute; so large, that though in general He calls for confession of our sins, He sometimes dispenses with that preliminary, and will not suffer even the delinquent himself to mention his transgression. He has so forgiven it, that He seems to have forgotten it too, and will have the sinner to forget it also. Such instances, perhaps, may not be common, but I know that there have been such, and it might be so with Nathan.

I know not what Johnson is about, neither do I

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now enquire. It will be a month to-morrow since I returned him the last proof. He might, I suppose, have published by this time, without hurrying himself into a fever, or breaking his neck through the violence of his dispatch. But having never seen the book advertised, I conclude that he has not. Had the parliament risen at the usual time, he would have been just too late, and though it sits longer than usual, or is likely to do so, I should not wonder if he were too late at last. Dr. Johnson laughs at Savage for charging the still-birth of a poem of his upon the bookseller's delay; yet when Dr. Johnson had a poem of his own to publish, no man ever discovered more anxiety to meet the market. But I have taken thought about it, till I am grown weary of the subject, and at last have placed myself much at my ease upon the cushion of this one resolution, that if ever I have dealings hereafter with my present manager, we will proceed upon other terms.

Mr. Wright called here last Sunday, by whom Lord Dartmouth made obliging enquiries after the volume, and was pleased to say that he was impatient to see it. I told him that I had ordered a copy to his Lordship, which I hoped he would receive if not soon, at least before he should retire into the country. I have also ordered one to Mr. Barham; and have many times blushed that I omitted to do so on the former occasion.

We suffer in this country very much by drought. The corn, I believe, is in most places thin, and the hay harvest amounts in some to not more than the fifth of a crop. Heavy taxes, excessive levies for the poor,

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and lean acres, have brought our farmers almost to their wits' end; and many, who are not farmers, are not very remote from the same point of despondency. I do not despond, because I was never much addicted to anxious thoughts about the future, in respect of temporals. But I feel myself a little angry with a minister, who, when he imposed a tax upon gloves, was not ashamed to call them a luxury. Caps and boots lined with fur, are not accounted a luxury in Russia, neither can gloves be reasonably deemed such in a climate sometimes hardly less severe than that. Nature, indeed, is content with little, and luxury seems, in some respect, rather relative, than of any fixed construction. Accordingly it may become, in time, a luxury for an Englishman to wear breeches, because it is possible to exist without them, and because persons of a moderate income may find them too expensive. I hope, however, to be hid in the dust before that day shall come; for, having worn them so many years, if they be indeed a luxury, they are such a one as I could very ill spare; yet spare them I must, if I cannot afford to wear them.

We are tolerably well in health, and as to spirits, much as usual—seldom better, sometimes worse.

Yours, my dear friend, affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 9, 1785.

You wrong your own judgement when you represent it as not to be trusted; and mine, if you suppose that I have that opinion of it. Had you disapproved, I should have been hurt and mortified. No man's disapprobation would have hurt me more. Your favourable sentiments of my book must consequently give me pleasure in the same proportion. By the post, last Sunday, I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth, in which he thanked me for my volume, of which he had read only a part. Of that part, however, he expresses himself in terms with which my authorship has abundant cause to be satisfied; and adds, that the specimen has made him impatient for the whole. I have likewise received a letter from a judicious friend of mine in London, and a man of fine taste, unknown to you, who speaks of it in the same language. Fortified by these cordials, I feel myself qualified to face the world without much anxiety, and delivered in a great measure from those fears which, I suppose, all men feel upon the like occasion.

My first volume I sent, as you may remember, to the Lord Chancellor, accompanied by a friendly but respectful epistle. His Lordship, however, thought it not worth his while to return me any answer, or to take the least notice of my present. I sent it also to Colman, manager of the Haymarket theatre, with whom I once was intimate. He likewise proved too great a man to recollect me; and though he has published since, did not account it necessary to return the

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compliment. I have allowed myself to be a little pleased with an opportunity to show them that I resent their treatment of me, and have sent this book to neither of them. They, indeed, are the former friends to whom I particularly allude in my epistle to Mr. Hill; and it is possible that they may take to themselves a censure that they so well deserve. If not, it matters not; for I shall never have any communication with them hereafter.

If Mr. Bates has found it difficult to furnish you with a motto to your volumes, I have no reason to imagine that I shall do it easily. I shall not leave my books unransacked; but there is something so new and peculiar in the occasion that suggested your subject, that I question whether, in all the classics, can be found a sentence suited to it. Our sins and follies, in this country, assume a shape that Heathen writers had never any opportunity to notice. They deified the dead, indeed. but not in the Temple of Jupiter. The new-made god had an altar of his own; and they conducted the ceremony without sacrilege or confusion. It is possible, however, and I think barely so, that somewhat may occur susceptible of accommodation to your purpose; and if it should, I shall be happy to serve you with it.

I told you, I believe, that the spinney has been cut down; and, though it may seem sufficient to have mentioned such an occurrence once, I cannot help recurring to the melancholy theme. Last night, at near nine o'clock, we entered it for the first time this summer. We had not walked many yards in it, before we perceived that this pleasant retreat is destined never

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to be a pleasant retreat again. In one more year, the whole will be a thicket. That which was once the serpentine walk is now in a state of transformation, and is already become as woody as the rest. Poplars and elms without number are springing in the turf. They are now as high as the knee. Before the summer is ended, they will be twice as high; and the growth of another season will make them trees. It will then be impossible for any but a sportsman and his dog to penetrate it. The desolation of the whole scene is such, that it sunk our spirits. The ponds are dry. The circular one, in front of the hermitage, is filled with flags and rushes; so that, if it contains any water, not a drop is visible. The weeping willow at the side of it, the only ornamental plant that has escaped the axe, is dead. The ivy and the moss, with which the hermitage was lined, are torn away; and the very mats that covered the benches have been stripped off, rent in tatters, and trodden under foot. So farewell, spinney; I have promised myself that I will never enter it again. We have both prayed in it: you for me, and I for you. But it is desecrated from this time forth, and the voice of prayer will be heard in it no more. The fate of it in this respect, however deplorable, is not peculiar. The spot where Jacob anointed his pillar, and, which is more apposite, the spot once honoured with the presence of Him who dwelt in the bush, have long since suffered similar disgrace, and are become common ground.

There is great severity in the application of the text you mention—I am *their music*. But it is not the worse for that. We both approve it highly. The

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other in Ezekiel does not seem quite so pat. The prophet complains that his word was to the people like a pleasant song, heard with delight, but soon forgotten. At the commemoration, I suppose that the word is nothing, but the music all in all. The Bible, however, will abundantly supply you with applicable passages. All passages, indeed, that animadvert upon the profanation of God's house and worship, seem to present themselves upon the occasion.

We have returned thanks to Mr. Wm. Unwin for a turbot and lobster, and he disclaims all right to the acknowledgement. Is it due to you and Mrs. Newton? If it be, accept a grateful one, accept likewise our love and best wishes; and believe me, my dear friend, with warm and true affection,

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR, Oct. 11, 1785.

You began your letter with an apology for long silence, and it is now incumbent upon me to do the same; and the rather, as your kind invitation to Wargrave entitled you to a speedier answer. The truth is, that I am become, if not a man of business, yet a busy man, and have been engaged almost this twelvemonth in a work that will allow of no long interruption. On this account it was impossible for me to accept your obliging summons; and having only to tell you that I could not, it appeared to me as a matter of no great

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moment, whether you received that intelligence soon or late.

You do me justice, when you ascribe my printed epistle to you, to my friendship for you; though, in fact, it was equally owing to the opinion that I have of yours for me. Having, in one part or other of my two volumes, distinguished by name the majority of those few for whom I entertain a friendship, it seemed to me that it would be unjustifiable negligence to omit yourself; and if I took that step without communicating to you my intention, it was only to gratify myself the more, with the hope of surprising you agreeably. Poets are dangerous persons to be acquainted with, especially if a man have that in his character that promises to shine in verse. To that very circumstance it is owing, that you are now figuring away in mine. For, notwithstanding what you say on the subject of honesty and friendship, that they are not splendid enough for public celebration, I must still think of them as I did before,—that there are no qualities of the mind and heart that can deserve it better. I can, at least for my own part, look round about upon the generality, and, while I see them deficient in those grand requisites of a respectable character, am not able to discover that they possess any other, of value enough to atone for the want of them.

I beg that you will present my respects to Mrs. Hill, and believe me

Ever affectionately yours,

W^M. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 7, 1785.

YOUR time being so much occupied as to leave you no opportunity for a word more than the needful, I am the more obliged to you that you have found leisure even for that, and thank you for the note above acknowledged.

I know not at present what subject I could enter upon, by which I should not put you to an expense of moments that you can ill spare: I have often been displeased when a neighbour of mine, being himself an idle man, has delivered himself from the burthen of a vacant hour or two, by coming to repose his idleness upon me. Not to incur, therefore, and deservedly, the blame that I have charged upon him, by interrupting you, who are certainly a busy man, whatever may be the case with myself, I shall only add that I am, with my respects to Mrs. Hill,

Affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 10, 1785.

WHAT you say of my last volume gives me the sincerest pleasure. I have heard a like favourable report of it from several different quarters, but never any (for obvious reasons) that has gratified me more than yours. I have a relish for moderate praise, because it bids fair to be judicious; but praise excessive, such as our poor friend ——'s, (I have an uncle also who cele-

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brates me exactly in the same language;)—such praise is rather too big for an ordinary swallow. I set down nine-tenths of it to the account of family partiality. I know no more than you what kind of a market my book has found; but this I believe, that had not Henderson died, and had it been worth my while to have given him a hundred pounds to have read it in public, it would have been more popular than it is. I am at least very unwilling to esteem John Gilpin as better worth than all the rest that I have written, and he has been popular enough.

Your sentiments of Pope's Homer agree perfectly with those of every competent judge with whom I have at any time conversed about it. I never saw a copy so unlike the original. There is not, I believe, in all the world to be found an uninspired poem so simple as those of Homer; nor in all the world a poem more bedizened with ornaments than Pope's translation of them. Accordingly, the sublime of Homer in the hands of Pope becomes bloated and tumid, and his description tawdry. Neither had Pope the faintest conception of those exquisite discriminations of character for which Homer is so remarkable. All his persons, and equally upon all occasions, speak in an inflated and strutting phraseology, as Pope has managed them; although in the original, the dignity of their utterance, even when they are most majestic, consists principally in the simplicity of their sentiments and of their language. Another censure I must needs pass upon our Anglo-Grecian, out of many that obtrude themselves upon me, but for which I have neither time to spare, nor room; which is, that with

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all his great abilities he was defective in his feelings to a degree that some passages in his own poems make it difficult to account for. No writer more pathetic than Homer, because none more natural; and because none less natural than Pope in his version of Homer, therefore than he none less pathetic. But I shall tire you with a theme with which I would not wish to cloy you beforehand.

If the great change in my experience, of which you express so lively an expectation, should take place, and whenever it shall take place, you may securely depend upon receiving the first notice of it. But whether you come with congratulations, or whether without them, I need not say that you and yours will always be most welcome here. Mrs. Unwin's love both to yourself and to Mrs. Newton joins itself as usual, and as warmly as usual, to that of

Yours, my dear friend,
affectionately and faithfully,
W^M. COWPER.

The following this moment occurs to me as a possible motto for the Messiah, if you do not think it too sharp:—

—— *Nunquam inducunt animum cantare*, rogati;
Injussi, *nunquam desistunt.*

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TO MR. JOHNSON.

SIR, Olney, March 5, 1786.

I OUGHT sooner to have acknowledged the receipt of Mr. Fuseli's strictures, and had I been at leisure to consult my own gratification, should have done so. The work will be greatly indebted to him, and I cannot help adding, although, I believe I said so before, that I consider myself singularly happy in the advantages I shall derive to my translation from his fine taste, and accurate acquaintance with the original.

I wish much for an answer to my question concerning my subscribers' payment at Bristol. Have you a correspondent there, who can negotiate it? Again I remind you, though perhaps unnecessarily, of the two volumes for Richard Howard, Esq.

I have this day sent to Lady Hesketh the remaining half of book 2, and the whole of books 3, 4, and 5. From her they will pass to General Cowper, and from him, I suppose, to Mr. Fuseli in a short time. In the interview he had with that gentleman, he was highly pleased with him.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

WM. COWPER.

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TO MR. JOHNSON.

SIR, Olney, March 8, 1786.

You are very happy in being so intimately connected with Mr. Fuseli, a gentleman of such exquisite taste, and I also account myself very happy that by your means my work has found its way into the hands of a person, in all respects so perfectly well qualified to revise it. I am only sorry that my distance from town permits me not (at least at present) the pleasure of an introduction to one to whom I am to be so much indebted. I very sincerely thank you for interesting yourself so much in my comfort, as to write to me principally with a view to inform me of his approbation. You may take my word for it that I find your intelligence on that head a great and effectual encouragement. I have had some anxious thoughts upon the matter, as you may suppose; and they are guests that I am always glad to dismiss when I can; and immediately after reading your letter, accordingly dismissed them.

Mr. Fuseli will assuredly find room for animadversion. There are some objectionable lines, and others that are improveable, of which I am myself aware. When I receive the MS. again I shall give it a close examination, both that I may avail myself of Mr. Fuseli's remarks to the utmost, and give to the whole of it the best finishing that I can.

I learn with pleasure from my friends in town, that the subscription prospers, and is likely to be brilliant and numerous. It is very little that in my situation I can contribute to it myself. I have, however, disposed of most of my papers, and some time about

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Easter, a friend of mine will attend you with two or three names and payments that have been picked up in this part of the world. The name of that friend is Bull. He is a humourist—and in some respects an oddity, but at the same time a man of excellent qualities and of much learning. Him I can see but seldom for he lives at the distance of five miles from Olney, and he is the only neighbour of mine with whom I can converse at all.

I have a relation at Bristol who subscribes for three sets, common paper. She wishes me to ask you whether you have not some correspondent at that place through whose hands the money may be remitted to you. If you can direct me how to advise her in this respect, when I write to her next,—which will be soon, I will send her the necessary information.

I am Sir,
Your most humble Servant,
WM. COWPER.

TO MR. JOHNSON.

SIR, Olney, Sept. 2, 1786.

I ENCLOSE a bill on Messrs Child and Co. for the sum of twenty two pounds one shilling, drawn by Mr. Walter Bagot and dated Blithfield, Aug. 28, 1786, and add the names of his friends who have subscribed it. Some time since I wrote to desire that you would enter the Rev. Walter Bagot himself, as a subscriber of twenty pounds, and shall be obliged to you if you will now send him a receipt for that sum (for which I will account with you in due time) together with

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receipts for the following persons, under cover to the Rt. Hon. Lord Bagot, Blithfield near Lichfield, Staffordshire. You will observe that they have all made the full payment, and all subscribe for royal paper; and I beg that you will be so kind as to enter them on the subscription board immediately.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Bagot,	2 copies	R. P.	6	6	0
Rt. Hon. Lady Bagot,	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
Rt. Hon. Earl of Uxbridge	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
Rt. Rev. Lord Bishop of Norwich . .	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
Charles Chester, Esq. .	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
William Swinnerton, Esq.	1 copy	do.	3	3	0
			£.22	1	0

Present, Sir, if you please my compliments to your friend Mr. Fuseli, and tell him that I shall be obliged to him if, when he has finished the revisal of the eighth book, he will be so kind as to send it to General Cowper's in Charles Street, together with his strictures. Assure him likewise that I will endeavour by the closest attention to all the peculiarities of my original, to save him as much trouble as I can, hereafter. I now perfectly understand what it is that he requires in a translator of Homer, and being convinced of the justness of his demands, will attempt at least to conform to them. Some escapes will happen in so long a work, which he will know how to account for and to pardon. I have been employed a considerable time in the cor-

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rection of the first seven books, and have not yet began the ninth, but shall in a day or two; and will send it as soon as finished.

I am Sir,
Your most humble servant,
WM. COWPER.

TO MR. WILLIAM CHURCHEY,
ATTORNEY AT LAW, HAY, BRECON.

Weston Underwood, near Olney, Bucks,
SIR, Dec. 13, 1786.

I RETURN as speedy an answer to your letter as possible, though it may seem to have been long delayed. When I told you that my time is almost totally engaged by my present undertaking, I did not at all exceed the truth. If you consider the length of the work, and the accuracy requisite to a successful performance of it, you will easily believe me.

I congratulate you on your possession of a poetical talent, which at such hours of leisure as you can win from a profession the least amusing in the world, must afford you often an agreeable entertainment. I find your versification smooth, your language correct and forcible, and especially in your translation of the Art of Painting. But you ask me, would I advise you to publish? I would advise every man to publish whose subjects are well chosen, whose sentiments are just, and who can afford to be a loser, if that should happen, by his publication. You are sensible that it is not an age in which poetry of a religious or moral tendency is likely to find many readers. But I know well that publication

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is necessary to give an edge to the poetical turn, and that what we produce in the closet, is never a vigorous birth if we intend that it should die there. For my own part I could no more amuse myself with writing verse, if I did not print it when written, than with the study of tactics, for which I can never have any real occasion. I therefore reason thus. You are a man of business: your business is in itself dry and fatiguing: you require a relaxation of your attention: you are capable of poetical exertions: there is no employment of the mind more innocent, or as it may be managed, more beneficial to others; but the most effectual spur to industry in all such exertions, is to lay the fruit of them before the public. From which premises I can draw no other conclusion than that I ought to advise you to print; especially as I understand that you have already dealt with printers, and can consequently better estimate your probability of success, than I, or any man can do it for you.

I was not willing to send you so expensive a packet by the post as I must have sent had I returned the pieces with which you have favoured me at this time. If you will be so good as to signify to me in what way you would wish to have them remitted to you, I will do accordingly. You may possibly have some friend in town through whose hands they may pass commodiously into yours.

I am much indebted to you for the obliging notice that you have taken of me in the verses that you mention: and am, Sir, with much respect,

Your most humble servant,

WM. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan, 13, 1787.

It gave me pleasure, such as it was, to learn by a letter from Mr. H. Thornton, that the Inscription for the tomb of poor Unwin has been approved of. The dead have nothing to do with human praises; but if they die in the Lord, they have abundant praises to render Him; which is far better. The dead, whatever they leave behind them, have nothing to regret. Good Christians are the only creatures in the world that are truly good; and them they will see again, and see them improved: therefore them they regret not. Regret is for the living. What we get, we soon lose; and what we lose, we regret. The most obvious consolation in this case seems to be, that we who regret others, shall quickly become objects of regret ourselves; for mankind are continually passing off in a rapid succession.

I have many kind friends, who, like yourself, wish that, instead of turning my endeavours to a translation of Homer, I had proceeded in the way of original poetry. But I can truly say that it was ordered otherwise, not by me, but by the Providence that governs all my thoughts, and directs my intentions as he pleases. It may seem strange, but it is true, that after having written a volume, in general with great ease to myself, I found it impossible to write another page. The mind of man is not a fountain, but a cistern; and mine, God knows, a broken one. It is my creed, that the intellect depends as much, both for the energy and the multitude of its exertions, upon the operations

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of *God's* agency upon it, as the heart, for the exercise of its graces, upon the influence of the Holy Spirit. According to this persuasion, I may very reasonably affirm, that it was not God's pleasure that I should proceed in the same track, because he did not enable me to do it. A whole year I waited and waited in circumstances of mind that made a state of non-employment peculiarly irksome to me. I longed for the pen, as the only remedy, but I could find no subject; extreme distress of spirit at last drove me, as, if I mistake not, I told you some time since, to lay Homer before me, and translate for amusement. Why it pleased God that I should be hunted into such a business, of such enormous length and labour, by miseries for which He did not see good to afford me any other remedy, I know not. But so it was; and jejune as the consolation may be, and unsuited to the exigencies of a mind that once was spiritual, yet a thousand times have I been glad of it; for a thousand times it has served at least to divert my attention, in some degree, from such terrible tempests as I believe have seldom been permitted to beat upon a human mind. Let my friends, therefore, who wish me some little measure of tranquillity in the performance of the most turbulent voyage that ever Christian mariner made, be contented, that, having Homer's mountains and forests to windward, I escape, under their shelter, from the force of many a gust that would almost overset me; especially when they consider that, not by choice, but by necessity, I make *them* my refuge. As to fame, and honour, and glory, that may be acquired by poetical feats of any sort, God knows, that if I could lay me down in

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my grave with hope at my side, or sit with hope at my side in a dungeon all the residue of my days, I would cheerfully wave them all. For the little fame that I have already earned has never saved me from one distressing night, or from one despairing day, since I first acquired it. *For* what I am reserved, or *to* what, is a mystery; I would fain hope, not merely that I may amuse others, or only to be a translator of Homer.

Sally Perry's case has given us much concern. I have no doubt that it is distemper. But distresses of mind, that are occasioned by distemper, are the most difficult of all to deal with. They refuse all consolation; they will hear no reason. God only, by his own immediate impressions, can remove them; as, after an experience of thirteen years' misery, I can abundantly testify.

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston Underwood, Sept. 22, 1787.

NOT well but better. I take an early opportunity to tell you that I am so. Perhaps I might have sent you a more satisfactory account of myself, had I postponed my letter yet a season; but Mrs. Unwin having engaged for me that I should write to you *myself* as soon as I should find myself able to do so, and my inclination prompting me to do it likewise, here I am! When I saw you I could not speak to you; now I can write to you, an alteration at least so much for the

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better as will serve to gratify the kindness of your feelings for me, and therefore you have a right to know it.

It would be better with me than it is, were I capable of resuming my occupation in the plains of Troy. But at present I do not feel myself free for that service. In the last year I seem to have lived twenty years. While I was busied in that work I seemed secure of bringing it to a conclusion. At the present moment life appears so short as not to afford me half scope enough for the undertaking. If my views in this respect should alter, I shall return to my work with pleasure, and in the mean time instead of producing any thing myself, must have recourse for amusement to the works of others. So it fares with mankind in general. We have not judgement or strength of mind for an arduous enterprise till two thirds of our allotted time are spent, and then, if through any infirmity of mind or body we happen to be thrown back, the remainder is too short to allow the hope of recovering the ground that we have lost. To reach the goal a man must have eyes to see it; but as for me I have no prospect.

W^M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston Underwood, Oct. 2, 1787.

AFTER a long but necessary interruption of our correspondence, I return to it again, in one respect, at least, better qualified for it than before; I mean by a belief of your identity, which for thirteen years I did

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not believe. The acquisition of this light, if light it may be called which leaves me as much in the dark as ever on the most interesting subjects, releases me however from the disagreeable suspicion that I am addressing myself to you as the friend whom I loved and valued so highly in my better days, while in fact you are not that friend, but a stranger. I can now write to you without seeming to act a part, and without having any need to charge myself with dissimulation ;—a charge from which, in that state of mind and under such an uncomfortable persuasion, I knew not how to exculpate myself, and which, as you will easily conceive, not seldom made my correspondence with you a burthen. Still, indeed, it wants, and is likely to want, that best ingredient which can alone make it truly pleasant either to myself or you—that spirituality which once enlivened all our intercourse. You will tell me, no doubt, that the knowledge I have gained is an earnest of more and more valuable information, and that the dispersion of the clouds in part, promises, in due time, their complete dispersion. I should be happy to believe it; but the power to do so is at present far from me. Never was the mind of man benighted to the degree that mine has been. The storms that have assailed me would have overset the faith of every man that ever had any; and the very remembrance of them, even after they have been long passed by, makes hope impossible.

Mrs. Unwin, whose poor bark is still held together, though shattered by being tossed and agitated so long at the side of mine, does not forget yours and Mrs. Newton's kindness on this last occasion. Mrs. New-

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ton's offer to come to her assistance, and your readiness to have rendered us the same service, could you have hoped for any salutary effect of your presence, neither Mrs. Unwin nor myself undervalue, nor shall presently forget. But you judged right when you supposed, that even your company would have been no relief to me; the company of my father or my brother, could they have returned from the dead to visit me, would have been none to me.

We are busied in preparing for the reception of Lady Hesketh, whom we expect here shortly. We have beds to put up, and furniture for beds to make; workmen, and scouring, and bustle. Mrs. Unwin's time has, of course, been lately occupied to a degree that made writing to her impracticable; and she excused herself the rather, knowing my intentions to take her office. It does not, however, suit me to write much at a time. This last tempest has left my nerves in a worse condition than it found them; my head, especially, though better informed, is more infirm than ever. I will, therefore, only add our joint love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, and that I am, my dear friend,

Your affectionate

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 1, 1788.

THAT my letters may not be exactly an echo to those which I receive, I seldom read a letter immediately before I answer it; trusting to my memory to suggest

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to me such of its contents as may call for particular notice. Thus I dealt with your last, which lay in my desk while I was writing to you. But my memory, or rather my recollection, failed me, in that instance. I had not forgotten Mr. Bean's letter, nor my obligations to you for the communication of it: but they did not happen to present themselves to me, in the proper moment, nor till some hours after my own had been dispatched. I now return it, with many thanks for so favourable a specimen of its author. That he is a good man, and a wise man, its testimony proves sufficiently; and I doubt not, that when he shall speak for himself, he will be found an agreeable one. For it is possible to be very good, and, in many respects, very wise; yet, at the same time, not the most delightful companion. Excuse the shortness of an occasional scratch, which I send in much haste; and believe me, my dear friend, with our united love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, of whose health we hope to hear a more favourable account, as the year rises,

Your truly affectionate

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 3, 1788.

I HAD not, as you may imagine, read more than two or three lines of the enclosed, before I perceived that I had accidentally come to the possession of another man's property; who, by the same misadventure, has doubtless occupied mine. I accordingly folded it

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again the moment after having opened it, and now return it.

The bells of Olney both last night and this morning have announced the arrival of Mr. Bean. I understand that he is now come with his family. It will not be long, therefore, before we shall be acquainted. I rather wish than hope that he may find himself comfortably situated; but the parishioners' admiration of Mr. Canniford, whatever the bells may say, is no good omen. It is hardly to be expected that the same people should admire both. The parishioners of Ra'nstone have been suitors to Mr. Finch that he would appoint that gentleman his curate, to which suit of theirs Mr. Finch has graciously condescended, and he is gone to reside among them.

I have lately been engaged in a correspondence with a lady whom I never saw. She lives at Pertenhall, near Kimbolton, and is the wife of a Dr. King, who has the living. She is, I understand, very happy in her husband, who for that reason I should suppose, is at least no enemy to the gospel, for she is evidently herself a Christian, and a very gracious one. I would that she had you for a correspondent rather than me. One letter from you would do her more good than a ream of mine. But so it is; and since I cannot depute my office to you, and am bound by all sorts of considerations to answer her this evening, I must necessarily quit you that I may have time to do it.

W^M. COWPER.

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TO MRS. HILL.

MY DEAR MADAM, March 17, 1788.

A THOUSAND thanks to you for your obliging and most acceptable present, which I received safe this evening. Had you known my occasions, you could not possibly have timed it more exactly. The Throckmorton family, who live in our neighbourhood, and who sometimes take a dinner with us, were, by engagement made with them two or three days ago, appointed to dine with us just at the time when your turkey will be in perfection. A turkey from Wargrave, the residence of my friend, and a turkey, as I conclude, of your breeding, stands a fair chance, in my account, to excel all other turkeys; and the ham, its companion, will be no less welcome.

I shall be happy to hear that my friend Joseph has recovered entirely from his late indisposition, which I was informed was gout; a distemper which, however painful in itself, brings at least some comfort with it, both for the patient and those who love him, the hope of length of days, and an exemption from numerous other evils. I wish him just so much of it as may serve for a confirmation of this hope, and not one twinge more.

Your husband, my dear Madam, told me, some time since, that a certain library of mine, concerning which I have heard no other tidings these five and twenty years, is still in being. Hue and cry have been made after it in Old Palace Yard, but hitherto in vain. If he can inform a bookless student in what region or in

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what nook his long-lost volumes may be found, he will render me an important service.

I am likely to be furnished soon with shelves, which my cousin of New Norfolk Street is about to send me; but furniture for these shelves I shall not presently procure, unless by recovering my stray authors. I am not young enough to think of making a new collection, and shall probably possess myself of few books hereafter but such as I may put forth myself, which cost me nothing but what I can better spare than money—time and consideration.

I beg, my dear Madam, that you will give my love to my friend, and believe me, with the warmest sense of his and your kindness,

Your most obliged
and affectionate
WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 17, 1788.

THE evening is almost worn away, while I have been writing a letter, to which I was obliged to give immediate attention. An application from a lady, and backed by you, could not be less than irresistible; that lady, too, a daughter of Mr. Thornton's. Neither are these words of course: since I returned to Homer in good earnest, I turn out of my way for no consideration that I can possibly put aside.

With modern tunes I am unacquainted, and have therefore accommodated my verse to an old one; not

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so old, however, but that there will be songsters found old enough to remember it. The song is an admirable one for which it was made, and, though political, nearly, if not quite, as serious as mine. On such a subject as I had before me, it seems impossible not to be serious. I shall be happy if it meet with your and Lady Balgonie's approbation.

Of Mr. Bean I could say much; but have only time at present to say that I esteem and love him. On some future occasion I shall speak of him more at large.

We rejoice that Mrs. Newton is better, and wish nothing more than her complete recovery. Dr. Ford is to be pitied. His wife, I suppose, is going to heaven; a journey which she can better afford to take, than he to part with her.

I am, my dear friend, with our united love to you all three, most truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 5, 1788.

IT is a comfort to me that you are so kind as to make allowance for me, in consideration of my being so busy a man. The truth is, that could I write with both hands, and with both at the same time, verse with one and prose with the other, I should not even so be able to dispatch both my poetry and my arrears of correspondence faster than I have need. The only oppor-

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tunities that I can find for conversing with distant friends, are in the early hour (and that sometimes reduced to half a one) before breakfast. Neither am I exempt from hinderances, which, while they last, are insurmountable; especially one, by which I have been occasionally a sufferer all my life. I mean an inflammation of the eyes; a malady under which I have lately laboured, and from which I am at this moment only in a small degree relieved. The last sudden change of the weather, from heat almost insupportable to a cold as severe as is commonly felt in mid-winter, would have disabled me entirely for all sorts of scribbling, had I not favoured the weak part a little, and given my eyes a respite.

It is certain that we do not live far from Olney, but, small as the distance is, it has too often the effect of a separation between the Beans and us. He is a man with whom, when I can converse at all, I can converse on terms perfectly agreeable to myself; who does not distress me with forms, nor yet disgust me by the neglect of them; whose manners are easy and natural, and his observations always sensible. I often, therefore, wish them nearer neighbours.

We have heard nothing of the Powleys since they left us, a fortnight ago; and should be uneasy at their silence on such an occasion, did we not know that she cannot write, and that he, on his first return to his parish after a long absence, may possibly find it difficult. Her we found much improved in her health and spirits, and him, as always, affectionate and obliging. It was an agreeable visit, and as it was ordered for

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me, I happened to have better spirits than I have enjoyed at any time since.

I shall rejoice if your friend Mr. Phillips, influenced by what you told him of my present engagements, shall waive his application to me for a poem on the slave-trade. I account myself honoured by his intention to solicit me on the subject, and it would give me pain to refuse him, which inevitably I shall be constrained to do. The more I have considered it, the more I have convinced myself that it is not a promising theme for verse. General censure on the iniquity of the practice will avail nothing. The world has been overwhelmed with such remarks already, and to particularize all the horrors of it were an employment for the mind both of the poet and his readers, of which they would necessarily soon grow weary. For my own part, I cannot contemplate the subject very nearly, without a degree of abhorrence that affects my spirits, and sinks them below the pitch requisite for success in verse. Lady Hesketh recommended it to me some months since, and then I declined it for these reasons, and for others which need not be mentioned here.

I return you many thanks for all your intelligence concerning the success of the gospel in far countries, and shall rejoice in a sight of Mr. Van Lier's letter, which, being so voluminous, I think you should bring with you, when you can take your flight to Weston, rather than commit to any other conveyance.

Remember that it is now summer, and that the summer flies fast, and that we shall be happy to see you and yours, as speedily and for as long a time as

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you can afford. We are sorry, truly so, that Mrs. Newton is so frequently and so much indisposed. Accept our best love to you both, and to your good niece Betsy, and believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

After what I have said on the subject of my writing engagements, I doubt not but you will excuse my transcribing the verses to Mrs. Montague, especially considering that my eyes are weary with what I have written this morning already. I feel somewhat like an impropriety in referring you to the next Gentleman's Magazine; but at the present juncture I know not how to do better.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 24, 1788.

I REJOICE that my letter found you at all points so well prepared to answer it according to our wishes. I have written to Lady Hesketh, to apprise her of your intended journey hither, and she, having as yet made no assignation with us herself, will easily adjust her measures to the occasion.

I have not lately had an opportunity of seeing Mr. Bean. The late rains, which have revived the hopes of the farmers, have intercepted our communication. I hear, however, that he meets with not a little trouble in his progress towards a reformation of Olney manners; and that the Sabbath, which he

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wishes to have hallowed by a stricter and more general observation of it, is, through the brutality of the lowest order, a day of more turbulence and riot than any other. At the latter end of last week he found himself obliged to make another trip to the justice, in company with two or three of the principal inhabitants. What passed, I have not learned; but I understand their errand to have been, partly at least, to efface the evil impressions made on his worship's mind, by a rascal who had applied to him a day or two before for a warrant against the constable; which, however, he did not obtain. I rather fear that the constables are not altogether judicious in the exercise either of their justice, or their mercy. Some who have seemed proper objects of punishment, they have released, on a hopeless promise of better behaviour; and others, whose offence has been personal against themselves, though in other respects less guilty, they have set in the stocks. The ladies, however, and of course the ladies of Silver-End in particular, give them the most trouble, being always active on these occasions, as well as clamorous, and both with impunity. For the sex are privileged in the free use of their tongues, and of their nails, the Parliament having never yet laid them under any penal restrictions; and they employ them accordingly. Johnson, the constable, lost much of his skin, and still more of his coat, in one of those Sunday battles: and had not Ashburner hastened to his aid, had probably been completely stripped of both. With such a zeal are these fair ones animated, though, unfortunately for all parties, rather erroneously.

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What you tell me of the effect that the limitation of numbers to tonnage, is likely to have on the Slave Trade, gives me the greatest pleasure. Should it amount, in the issue, to an abolition of the traffic, I shall account it indeed an argument of great wisdom in our youthful minister. A silent, and indirect way of doing it, is, I suppose, the only safe one. At the same time, in how horrid a light does it place the trade itself; when it comes to be proved by consequences, that the mere article of a little elbow-room for the poor creatures in their passage to the islands, could not be secured by an order of Parliament, without the utter annihilation of it! If so it prove, no man deserving to be called a man, can say that it ought to subsist a moment longer.—My writing-time is expended, and breakfast is at hand. With our joint love to the trio, and our best wishes for your good journey to Weston, I remain, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

P. S. I beg you will present my best respects to Mr. Phillips, with many thanks for his obliging present, which I shall highly value.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 6, 1788.

"BITTER constraint and sad occasion dear" have compelled me to draw on you for the sum of twenty pounds, payable to John Higgins, Esq. or order. The

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draft bears date July 5th.—You will excuse my giving you this trouble, in consideration that I am a poet, and can consequently draw for money much easier than I can earn it.

I heard of you a few days since, from Walter Bagot, who called here and told me that you were gone, I think, into Rutlandshire, to settle the accounts of a large estate unliquidated many years. Intricacies, that would turn my brains, are play to you. But I give you joy of a long vacation at hand, when I suppose that even you will find it pleasant, if not to be idle, at least not to be hemmed around by business.

Yours ever,

Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 2, 1788.

I REJOICE that you and yours reached London safe, especially when I reflect that you performed the journey on a day so fatal, as I understand, to others travelling the same road. I found those comforts in your visit which have formerly sweetened all our interviews, in part restored. I knew you; knew you for the same shepherd who was sent to lead me out of the wilderness into the pasture where the chief Shepherd feeds his flock, and felt my sentiments of affectionate friendship for you the same as ever. But one thing was still wanting, and that thing the crown of all. I shall find it in God's time, if it be not lost for ever. When I say this, I say it trembling; for at what time soever comfort shall come, it will not come

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without its attendant evil; and whatever good thing may occur in the interval, I have sad forebodings of the event, having learned by experience that I was born to be persecuted with peculiar fury, and assuredly believing, that such as my lot has been, it will be so to the end. This belief is connected in my mind with an observation I have often made, and is perhaps founded, in great part, upon it: that there is a certain *style* of dispensations maintained by Providence in the dealings of God with every man, which, however the incidents of his life may vary, and though he may be thrown into many different situations, is never exchanged for another. The style of dispensation peculiar to myself has hitherto been that of sudden, violent, unlooked-for change. When I have thought myself falling into the abyss, I have been caught up again; when I have thought myself on the threshold of a happy eternity, I have been thrust down to hell. The rough and the smooth of such a lot, taken together, should perhaps have taught me never to despair; but through an unhappy propensity in my nature to forebode the worst, they have, on the contrary, operated as an admonition to me never to hope. A firm persuasion that I can never durably enjoy a comfortable state of mind, but must be depressed in proportion as I have been elevated, withers my joys in the bud, and, in a manner, entombs them before they are born: for I have no expectation but of sad vicissitude, and ever believe that the last shock of all will be fatal.

We have been careful to execute your commission of compliments and respects to the Throckmortons. They speak of you both in the handsomest terms;

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and I have little doubt that Mrs. Frog will visit Colman's Buildings the first opportunity.

Mr. Bean has still some trouble with his parishioners. The suppression of five public-houses is the occasion. He called on me yesterday morning for advice; though, discreet as he is himself, he has little need of such counsel as I can give him. Harold, who is subtle as a dozen foxes, met him on Sunday, exactly at his descent from the pulpit, and proposed to him a general meeting of the parish, in vestry, on the subject. Mr. Bean, attacked so suddenly, consented; but afterward repented that he had done so, assured as he was that he should be out-voted. There seemed no remedy but to apprise them beforehand that he would meet them indeed, but not with a view to have the question decided by a majority: that he would take that opportunity to make his allegations against each of the houses in question, which if they could refute, well; if not, they could no longer reasonably oppose his measures. This was what he came to submit to my opinion. I could do no less than approve it; and he left me with a purpose to declare his mind to them immediately.

My thanks attend Mrs. Newton for her Cambridge news. The worthy Doctor may fairly be said to be in a *sad scrape*.—I beg that you will give my affectionate respects to Mr. Bacon, and assure him of my sincere desire that he should think himself perfectly at liberty respecting the mottos, to choose one, or to reject both, as likes him best. I wish also to be remembered with much affection to Mrs. Cowper, and always rejoice to hear of her well-being.

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Mrs. Unwin will speak for herself. She is going she tells me to write to Mrs. Newton. You will therefore present my best love to her and to Miss Catty, and believe me, as I truly am, my dear friend,

Most affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Oct. 30, 1788.

THE good fortune that you wished me I have actually enjoyed, having had an opportunity by means of Lady Hesketh's carriage to see your brother Howard at Chicheley. I had the pleasure of spending near an hour with him in the study, for the consequences of his unfortunate fall which he got in Norfolk, did not permit him to join the ladies in the saloon. It gave me much concern that not having seen him so many years, I should at last find him with a broken bone. He was however otherwise in good health, and as I told him, had suffered less in his looks by the lapse of time that has passed since we were all at school together, than any of us.

I was truly happy to be the instrument of bringing the Chesters and my cousin to an acquaintance. She and your sister would love each other more than people generally do in this neighbourhood, could they come often together. Another year perhaps may afford more frequent opportunities than they are likely to find in the present, which is now far spent, and threatens us with foul weather soon and dirty roads, which make Chicheley unapproachable by mortal

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wight who is subject to fear in a carriage. Menelaus tells Telemachus that had Ulysses returned safe from Troy it was in his intention to have built him a city and a house in Argos, that he and his people, transferring themselves thither from Ithaca, might have become his neighbour. Had I the thousands with which some people are favoured I would galdly build for the Chesters, not a city, which they would not want, but a house at least as good as that which Menelaus had designed for Ulysses, in the precincts of Weston Underwood, their non-residence here being the only defect in the situation.—But I ought to account myself in my present circumstances here, if not so happy as in that case I should be, at least as happy as a world which I do not hold, as the saying is, in a string, is ever likely to make me. We are but one remove from brother and sister, and that distance has long since been absorbed by a more than sisterly affection.

The Northampton Clerk has been with me again, and I have again promised him my assistance. You may depend on my sending you a printed copy of this my second meditation upon churchyard subjects, as soon as I have received the impression. It is likely indeed to be an annual remittance; for said Clerk will I dare say resort to me for poetical aid till either he or I shall want an epitaph for ourselves. I am not sorry to be employed by him, considering the task, in respect of the occasion of it, as even more important than Iliad and Odyssey together. To put others in mind of their latter end, is at least as proper an occupation for a man whose own latter end is nearer by

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almost sixty years than once it was, as to write about gods and heroes. Let me once get well out of these two long stories, and if I ever meddle with such matters more, call me, as Fluellen says, a fool and an ass and a prating coxcomb.

It gives me much pleasure to hear that Lord Bagot is so well, and I sincerely wish that he may find the Naiads of Buxton as propitious to him as those of Cheltenham. The Peerage can ill spare such Peers as he.

With Mrs. Unwin's best respects, I remain, my dear friend, most truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 9, 1788.

THAT I may return you the Latin manuscript as soon as possible, I take a short opportunity to scratch a few hasty lines, that it may not arrive alone. I have made here and there an alteration, which appeared to me for the better; but, on the whole, I cannot but wonder at your adroitness in a business to which you have been probably at no time much accustomed, and which, for many years, you have not at all practised. If, when you shall have written the whole, you shall wish for a corrector of the rest, so far as my own skill in the matter goes, it is entirely at your service.

Lady Hesketh is obliged to you for the part of your letter in which she is mentioned, and returns her compliments. She loves all my friends, and consequently cannot be indifferent to you. The Throckmortons are

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gone into Norfolk, on a visit to Lord Petre. They will probably return this day fortnight. Mr. F——— is now preacher at Ravenstone. Mr. C——— still preaches here. The latter is warmly attended. The former has heard him, having, I suppose, a curiosity to know by what charm he held his popularity; but whether he has heard him to his own edification, or not, is more than I can say. Probably he wonders, for I have heard that he is a sensible man. His successful competitor is wise in nothing but his knowledge of the gospel.

I am summoned to breakfast, and am, my dear friend, with our best love to Mrs. Newton, Miss Catlett, and yourself,

Most affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

I have not the assurance to call this an answer to your letter, in which were many things deserving much notice: but it is the best that, in the present moment, I am able to send you.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 12, 1789.

I REJOICE that you and Mrs. Hill are so agreeably occupied in your retreat. August, I hope, will make us amends for the gloom of its many wintry predecessors. We are now gathering from our meadows, not hay, but muck; such stuff as deserves not the carriage, which yet it must have, that the after-crop may have

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leave to grow. The Ouse has hardly deigned to run in his channel since the summer began.

My muse were a vixen, if she were not always ready to fly in obedience to your commands. But what can be done? I can write nothing in the few hours that remain to me of this day, that will be fit for your purpose; and, unless I could dispatch what I write by to-morrow's post, it would not reach you in time. I must add, too, that my friend the vicar of the next parish engaged me, the day before yesterday, to furnish him by next Sunday with a hymn, to be sung on the occasion of his preaching to the children of the Sunday-school: of which hymn I have not yet produced a syllable. I am somewhat in the case of lawyer Dowling, in Tom Jones; and could I split myself into as many poets as there are Muses, could find employment for them all.

Adieu, my dear friend,
I am ever yours,
WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 5, 1790.

YOUR kind letter deserved a speedier answer, but you know my excuse, which were I to repeat always, my letters would resemble the fag-end of a newspaper, where we always find the price of stocks, detailed with little or no variation.

When January returns, you have your feelings concerning me, and such as prove the faithfulness of your friendship. I have mine also concerning myself, but

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they are of a cast different from yours. Yours have a mixture of sympathy and tender solicitude, which makes them, perhaps, not altogether unpleasant. Mine, on the contrary, are of an unmixed nature, and consist simply, and merely, of the most alarming apprehensions. Twice has that month returned upon me, accompanied by such horrors as I have no reason to suppose ever made part of the experience of any other man. I accordingly look forward to it, and meet it, with a dread not to be imagined. I number the nights as they pass, and in the morning bless myself that another night is gone, and no harm has happened. This may argue, perhaps, some imbecility of mind, and no small degree of it; but it is natural, I believe, and so natural as to be necessary and unavoidable. I know that God is not governed by secondary causes, in any of his operations, and that, on the contrary, they are all so many agents, in his hand, which strike only when he bids them. I know consequently that one month is as dangerous to me as another, and that in the middle of summer, at noon-day, and in the clear sunshine, I am, in reality, unless guarded by him, as much exposed, as when fast asleep at midnight, and in mid-winter. But we are not always the wiser for our knowledge, and I can no more avail myself of mine, than if it were in the head of another man, and not in my own. I have heard of bodily aches and ails that have been particularly troublesome when the season returned in which the hurt that occasioned them was received. The mind, I believe, (with my own, however, I am sure it is so,) is liable to similar periodical affection. But February is come; January,

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my terror, is passed; and some shades of the gloom that attended his presence, have passed with him. I look forward with a little cheerfulness to the buds and the leaves that will soon appear, and say to myself, till they turn yellow I will make myself easy. The year *will* go round, and January *will* approach. I *shall* tremble again, and I know it; but in the mean time I will be as comfortable as I can. Thus, in respect of peace of mind, such as it is that I enjoy, I subsist, as the poor are vulgarly said to do, from hand to mouth; and, of a Christian, such as you once knew me, am, by a strange transformation, become an Epicurean philosopher, bearing this motto on my mind,—*Quid sit futurum cras, fuge quærere.*

I have run on in a strain that the beginning of your letter suggested to me, with such impetuosity, that I have not left myself opportunity to write more by the present post: and being unwilling that you should wait longer for what will be worth nothing when you get it, will only express the great pleasure we feel on hearing, as we did lately from Mr. Bull, that Mrs. Newton is so much better.

Mrs. Unwin has been very indifferent all the winter, harassed by continual head-aches and want of sleep, the consequences of a nervous fever: but I hope she begins to recover.

With our best love to Mrs. Newton, not forgetting Miss Catlett,

I remain, my dear friend,

Truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 2, 1790.

I AM still at the old sport—Homer all the morning, and Homer all the evening. Thus have I been held in constant employment, I know not exactly how many, but I believe these six years, an interval of eight months excepted. It is now become so familiar to me to take Homer from my shelf at a certain hour, that I shall, no doubt, continue to take him from my shelf at the same time, even after I have ceased to want him. That period is not far distant. I am now giving the last touches to a work which, had I foreseen the difficulty of it, I should never have meddled with; but which, having at length nearly finished it to my mind, I shall discontinue with regret.

My very best compliments attend Mrs. Hill, whom I love, unsight unseen, as they say; but yet truly.

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 11, 1790.

THAT I may not seem unreasonably tardy in answering your last kind letter, I steal a few minutes from my customary morning business, (at present the translation of Mr. Van Lier's Narrative,) to inform you that I received it safe from the hands of Judith Hughes, whom we met in the middle of Hill-field. Desirous of gaining the earliest intelligence possible concerning Mrs. Newton, we were going to call on her, and she

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was on her way to us. It grieved us much that her news on that subject corresponded so little with our earnest wishes of Mrs. Newton's amendment. But if Dr. Benamer still gives hope of her recovery, it is not, I trust, without substantial reason for doing so; much less can I suppose that he would do it contrary to his own persuasions, because a thousand reasons that must influence, in such a case, the conduct of a humane and sensible physician, concur to forbid it. If it shall please God to restore her, no tidings will give greater joy to us. In the mean time, it is our comfort to know, that in any event you will be sure of supports invaluable, and that cannot fail you; though, at the same time, I know well, that, with your feelings, and especially on so affecting a subject, you will have need of the full exercise of all your faith and resignation. To a greater trial no man can be called, than that of being a helpless eyewitness of the sufferings of one he loves, and loves tenderly. This I know by experience: but it is long since I had any experience of those communications from above, which alone can enable us to acquit ourselves, on such an occasion, as we ought. But it is otherwise with you, and I rejoice that it is so.

With respect to my own initiation into the secret of animal magnetism, I have a thousand doubts. Twice, as you know, I have been overwhelmed with the blackest despair; and at those times every thing in which I have been at any period of my life concerned, has afforded to the enemy a handle against me. I tremble, therefore, almost at every step I take, lest on some future similar occasion it should yield him

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opportunity, and furnish him with means to torment me. Decide for me, if you can; and in the mean time, present, if you please, my respectful compliments and very best thanks to Mr. Holloway, for his most obliging offer. I am, perhaps, the only man living who would hesitate a moment, whether, on such easy terms, he should or should not accept it. But if he finds another like me, he will make a greater discovery than even that which he has already made of the principles of this wonderful art. For I take it for granted, that he is the gentleman whom you once mentioned to me as indebted only to his own penetration for the knowledge of it.

I shall proceed, you may depend on it, with all possible dispatch in your business. Had it fallen into my hands a few months later, I should have made quicker riddance; for before the autumn shall be ended, I hope to have done with Homer. But my first morning hour or two (now and then a letter which must be written excepted) shall always be at your service till the whole is finished.

Commending you and Mrs. Newton, with all the little power I have of that sort, to His fatherly and tender care in whom you have both believed, in which friendly office I am fervently joined by Mrs. Unwin, I remain, with our sincere love to you both, and to Miss Catlett, my dear friend,

Most affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 17, 1790.

I RECEIVED last night a copy of my subscribers' names from Johnson, in which I see how much I have been indebted to yours and to Mrs. Hill's solicitations. Accept my best thanks, so justly due to you both. It is an illustrious catalogue, in respect of rank and title; but methinks I should have liked it as well had it been more numerous. The sum subscribed, however, will defray the expense of printing; which is as much as, in these unsubscribing days, I had any reason to promise myself. I devoutly second your droll wish, that the booksellers may contend about me. The more the better. Seven times seven, if they please; and let them fight with the fury of Achilles,

> Till every rubric-post be crimson'd o'er
> With blood of booksellers, in battle slain,
> For me, and not a periwig untorn.

Most truly yours,
WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 15, 1790.

WE were surprised and grieved at Mrs. Scott's sudden departure; grieved, you may suppose, not for *her*, but for *him*, whose loss, except that in God he has an all-sufficient good, is irreparable. The day of separation between those who have loved long and well, is an aweful day, inasmuch as it calls the Christian's faith and submission to the severest trial. Yet I account

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those happy, who, if they are severely tried, shall yet be supported, and be carried safely through. What would become of me on a similar occasion! I have one comfort, and only one: bereft of that, I should have nothing left to lean on; for my spiritual props have long since been struck from under me.

I have no objection at all to being known as the translator of Van Lier's Letters, when they shall be published. Rather, I am ambitious of it, as an honour. It will serve to prove, that if I have spent much time to little purpose in the translation of Homer, some small portion of my time has, however, been well disposed of.

The honour of your preface prefixed to my Poems will be on my side; for surely, to be known as the friend of a much-favoured minister of God's word, is a more illustrious distinction, in reality, than to have the friendship of any poet in the world to boast of.

We sympathize truly with you under all your tender concern for Mrs. Newton, and with her in all her sufferings from such various and discordant maladies. Alas! what a difference have twenty-three years made in us, and in our condition! for just so long it is since Mrs. Unwin and I came into Buckinghamshire. Yesterday was the anniversary of that memorable æra. Farewell.

W^M. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 26, 1790.

We should have been happy to have received from you a more favourable account of Mrs. Newton's health. Yours is indeed a post of observation, and of observation the most interesting. It is well that you are enabled to bear the stress and intenseness of it without prejudice to your own health, or impediment to your ministry.

The last time I wrote to Johnson, I made known to him your wishes to have your preface printed, and affixed, as soon as an opportunity shall offer; expressing, at the same time, my own desires to have it done. Whether I shall have any answer to my proposal, is a matter of much uncertainty; for he is always either too idle or too busy, I know not which, to write to me. Should you happen to pass his way, perhaps it would not be amiss to speak to him on the subject; for it is easier to carry a point by six words spoken, than by writing as many sheets about it. I have asked him hither, when my cousin Johnson shall leave us, which will be in about a fortnight; and should he come, will enforce the measure myself.

A yellow shower of leaves is falling continually from all the trees in the country. A few moments only seem to have passed since they were buds; and in few moments more, they will have disappeared. It is one advantage of a rural situation, that it affords many hints of the rapidity with which life flies, that do not occur in towns and cities. It is impossible for a man, con-

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versant with such scenes as surround me, not to advert daily to the shortness of his existence here, admonished of it, as he must be, by ten thousand objects. There was a time when I could contemplate my present state, and consider myself as a thing of a day with pleasure; when I numbered the seasons as they passed in swift rotation, as a schoolboy numbers the days that interpose between the next vacation, when he shall see his parents and enjoy his home again. But to make so just an estimate of a life like this, is no longer in my power. The consideration of my short continuance here, which was once grateful to me, now fills me with regret. I would live and live always, and am become such another wretch as Mæcenas was, who wished for long life, he cared not at what expense of sufferings. The only consolation left me on this subject is, that the voice of the Almighty can in one moment cure me of this mental infirmity. That He can, I know by experience; and there are reasons for which I ought to believe that He will. But from hope to despair is a transition that I have made so often, that I can only consider the hope that may come, and that sometimes I believe will, as a short prelude of joy to a miserable conclusion of sorrow that shall never end. Thus are my brightest prospects clouded, and thus to me is hope itself become like a withered flower, that has lost both its hue and its fragrance.

I ought not to have written in this dismal strain to you, in your present trying situation, nor did I intend it. You have more need to be cheered than to be saddened; but a dearth of other themes constrained

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me to choose myself for a subject, and of myself I can write no otherwise.

Adieu, my dear friend. We are well; and, notwithstanding all that I have said, I am myself as cheerful as usual. Lady Hesketh is here, and in her company even I, except now and then for a moment, forget my sorrows.

I remain sincerely yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 5, 1790.

SOMETIMES I am too sad, and sometimes too busy, to write. Both these causes have concurred lately to keep me silent. But more than by either of these I have been hindered, since I received your last, by a violent cold, which oppressed me during almost the whole month of November.

Your letter affected us with both joy and sorrow: with sorrow and sympathy respecting poor Mrs. Newton, whose feeble and dying state suggests a wish for her release, rather than for her continuance; and joy on your account, who are enabled to bear, with so much resignation and cheerful acquiescence in the will of God, the prospect of a loss, which even they who know you best apprehended might prove too much for you. As to Mrs. Newton's interest in the best things, none, intimately acquainted with her as we have been, could doubt it. She doubted it indeed herself; but though it is not our duty to doubt, any more than it is our privilege, I have always considered the self-con-

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demning spirit, to which such doubts are principally owing, as one of the most favourable symptoms of a nature spiritually renewed, and have many a time heard you make the same observation.

[Torn off.]

TO MR. WALTER CHURCHEY,

ATTORNEY AT LAW, HAY, BRECON.

DEAR SIR, Weston Underwood, Dec. 24, 1790.

You know my occupation, and will be more charitable I trust, than to impute to negligence my tardiness in replying to your obliging letters.

I have much to thank you for. Imprimis for your remarks on the specimen, which, I dare say, were favourable enough to me. I know not if they have been published according to your desire, but I apprehend that Johnson, who is my *fac-totum* in every thing that relates to Homer, may have judged it to be rather too late in the day to print a commentary on that passage now, which was itself printed five years ago, and which the critics have already mumbled.

I thank you also for the respectable names which you have procured me, and have added them to my catalogue.

To say that I was grieved at the treatment you have received from the Reviewers is saying little, for I felt myself not more grieved than angry. To censure a book in that general manner is neither just to the author of it, nor satisfactory to their own readers. Extracts should always be given; first, as a proof that

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they have read what they condemn, and, secondly, that the public may judge for themselves.

I sent your publisher's address to Johnson, and directed *him* to send me your volume; but though he is a sensible man, and an honest one, I have not a few reasons to suspect that he is rather indolent, and to that cause ascribe it that I have never yet had the pleasure you intended me. Should it be convenient to you to order your own bookseller to send it by the Olney waggon, I shall be sure of it. The waggon will be found at the Windmill, St. John Street, Smithfield.

I never feel myself poor but when I see or hear of a valuable man whose exigencies exceed my ability to relieve them. How heartily and gladly I would administer to the complete removal of yours were it in my power, God knows.

I am, dear Sir, with much respect,
Your obliged humble servant,
WM. COWPER.

You may tell your friends that my work is in the press, and will be published in the spring.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 29, 1791.

IT affords me sincere pleasure that you enjoy serenity of mind after your great loss. It is well in all circumstances, even in the most afflictive, with those who have God for their comforter. You do me justice in giving entire credit to my expressions of friendship for

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you. No day passes in which I do not look back to the days that are fled; and consequently, none in which I do not feel myself affectionately reminded of you, and of her whom you have lost for a season. I cannot even see Olney spire from any of the fields in the neighbourhood, much less can I enter the town, and still less the vicarage, without experiencing the force of those mementos, and recollecting a multitude of passages, to which you and yours were parties.

The past would appear a dream, were the remembrance of it less affecting. It was in the most important respects so unlike my present moment, that I am sometimes almost tempted to suppose it a dream. But the difference between dreams and realities long since elapsed seems to consist chiefly in this,—that a dream, however painful or pleasant at the time, and perhaps for a few ensuing hours, passes like an arrow through the air, leaving no trace of its flight behind it; but our actual experiences make a lasting impression. We review those which interested us much, when they occurred, with hardly less interest than in the first instance; and whether few years or many have intervened, our sensibility makes them still present; such a mere nullity is time, to a creature to whom God gives a feeling heart and the faculty of recollection.

That you have not the first sight, and sometimes, perhaps, have a late one, of what I write, is owing merely to your distant situation. Some things I have written not worth your perusal; and a few, a very few, of such length, that, engaged as I have been to Homer, it has not been possible that I should find opportunity to transcribe them. At the same time, Mrs. Unwin's

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constant pain in her side has almost forbidden her the use of the pen. She cannot use it long without increasing that pain; for which reason I am more unwilling than herself that she should ever meddle with it. But, whether what I write be a trifle, or whether it be serious, you would certainly, were you present, see them all. Others get a sight of them, by being so, who would never otherwise see them; and I should hardly withhold them from you, whose claim upon me is of so much older a date than theirs. It is not, indeed, with readiness and good-will that I give them to any body; for, if I live, I shall probably print them; and my friends, who are previously well acquainted with them, will have less reason to value the book in which they shall appear. A trifle can have nothing to recommend it but its novelty. I have spoken of giving copies; but, in fact, I have given none. They who have them made them; for, till my whole work shall have fairly passed the press, it will not leave me a moment more than is necessarily due to my correspondents. Their number has of late increased upon me, by the addition of many of my maternal relations, who, having found me out about a year since, have behaved to me in the most affectionate manner, and have been singularly serviceable to me in the article of my subscription. Several of them are coming from Norfolk to visit me in the course of the summer.

I enclose a copy of my last mortuary verses. The clerk, for whom they were written, is since dead; and whether his successor, the late sexton, will choose to be his own dirge-maker, or will employ me, is a piece of important news which has not yet reached me.

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Our best remembrances attend yourself and Miss Catlett, and we rejoice in the kind Providence that has given you, in her, so amiable and comfortable a companion.

Adieu, my dear friend,
I am sincerely yours,
WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 24, 1791.

CONSIDERING the multiplicity of your engagements, and the importance, no doubt, of most of them, I am bound to set the higher value on your letters; and instead of grumbling that they come seldom, to be thankful to you that they come at all. You are now going into the country, where, I presume, you will have less to do; and I am rid of Homer. Let us try, therefore, if in the interval between the present hour and the next busy season, (for I, too, if I live, shall probably be occupied again,) we can continue to exchange letters more frequently than for some time past.

You do justice to me and Mrs. Unwin, when you assure yourself that to hear of your health will give us pleasure: I know not, in truth, whose health and well-being could give us more. The years that we have seen together will never be out of our remembrance; and so long as we remember them, we must remember you with affection. In the pulpit, and out of the pulpit, you have laboured in every possible way to serve us; and we must have a short memory indeed for the

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kindness of a friend, could we, by any means, become forgetful of yours. It would grieve me more than it does, to hear you complain of the effects of time, were not I also myself the subject of them. While he is wearing out you, and other dear friends of mine, he spares not me; for which I ought to account myself obliged to him, since I should otherwise be in danger of surviving all that I have ever loved—the most melancholy lot that can befall a mortal. God knows what will be my doom hereafter; but precious as life necessarily seems to a mind doubtful of its future happiness, I love not the world, I trust, so much as to wish a place in it, when all my beloved shall have left it.

You speak of your late loss in a manner that affected me much; and when I read that part of your letter, I mourned with you, and for you. But surely, I said to myself, no man had ever less reason to charge his conduct to a wife with any thing blame-worthy. Thoughts of that complexion, however, are no doubt extremely natural on the occasion of such a loss; and a man seems not to have valued sufficiently, when he possesses it no longer, what, while he possessed it, he valued more than life. I am mistaken, too, or you can recollect a time when you had fears, and such as became a Christian, of loving too much; and it is likely that you have even prayed to be preserved from doing so. I suggest this to you as a plea against those self-accusations, which I am satisfied that you do not deserve, and as an effectual answer to them all. You may do well, too, to consider, that had the deceased been the surviver, she would have charged herself in

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the same manner; and I am sure you will acknowledge, without any sufficient reason. The truth is, that you both loved at least as much as you ought, and I dare say had not a friend in the world who did not frequently observe it. To love just enough, and not a bit too much, is not for creatures who can do nothing well. If we fail in duties less arduous, how should we succeed in this, the most arduous of all?

As to Jenny Raban, we have seen nothing of her. Either she forgot your injunction to call on us, or for some reason or other did not chuse it.

I am glad to learn from yourself that you are about to quit a scene that probably keeps your tender recoltions too much alive. Another place and other company may have their uses; and while your church is undergoing repair, its minister may be repaired also.

As to Homer, I am sensible that, except as an amusement, he was never worth my meddling with; but, as an amusement, he was to me invaluable. As such, he served me more than five years; and, in that respect, I know not where I shall find his equal. You oblige me by saying, that you will read him for my sake. I verily think that any person of a spiritual turn may read him to some advantage. He may suggest reflections that may not be unserviceable even in a sermon; for I know not where we can find more striking exemplars of the pride, the arrogance, and the insignificance of man; at the same time that, by ascribing all events to a divine interposition, he inculcates constantly the belief of a Providence; insists much on the duty of charity towards the poor and the stranger; on the respect that is due to superiors, and to our

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seniors in particular; and on the expedience and necessity of prayer and piety toward the gods; a piety mistaken, indeed, in its object, but exemplary for the punctuality of its performance. Thousands, who will not learn from Scripture to ask a blessing either on their actions or on their food, may learn it, if they please, from Homer.

My Norfolk cousins are now with us. We are both as well as usual; and with our affectionate remembrances to Miss Catlett,

I remain, sincerely yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 22, 1791.

I DID not foresee, when I challenged you to a brisker correspondence, that a new engagement of all my leisure was at hand;—a new, and yet an old one. An interleaved copy of my Homer, arrived soon after from Johnson, in which he recommended it to me to make any alterations that might yet be expedient, with a view to another impression. The alterations that I make are indeed but few, and they are also short: not more, perhaps, than half a line in two thousand. But the lines are, I suppose, nearly forty thousand in all; and to revise them critically must consequently be a work of labour. I suspend it, however, for your sake, till the present sheet be filled, and that I may not seem to shrink from my own offer.

Mr. Bean has told me that he saw you at Bedford, and gave us your reasons for not coming our way.

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It is well, so far as your own comfortable lodging and our gratification were concerned, that you did not; for our house is brimful, as it has been all the summer, with my relations from Norfolk. We should all have been mortified, both you and we, had you been obliged, as you must have been, to seek a residence elsewhere.

I am sorry that Mr. Venn's labours below are so near to a conclusion. I have seen few men whom I could have loved more, had opportunity been given me to know him better. So, at least, I have thought as often as I have seen him. But when I saw him last, which is some years since, he appeared then so much broken, that I could not have imagined he would last so long. Were I capable of envying, in the strict sense of the word, a good man, I should envy him, and Mr. Berridge, and yourself; who have spent, and, while they last, will continue to spend your lives, in the service of the only Master worth serving; labouring always for the souls of men, and not to tickle their ears, as I do. But this I can say—God knows how much rather I would be the obscure tenant of a lath-and-plaster-cottage, with a lively sense of my interest in a Redeemer, than the most admired object of public notice without it. Alas! what is a whole poem, even one of Homer's, compared with a single aspiration that finds its way immediately to God, though clothed in ordinary language, or perhaps not articulated at all. These are my sentiments as much as ever they were, though my days are all running to waste among Greeks and Trojans. The night cometh when no man can work; and if I am ordained to work to better purpose,

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that desirable period cannot be very distant. My day is beginning to shut in, as every man's must, who is on the verge of sixty.

All the leisure that I have had of late for thinking has been given to the riots at Birmingham. What a horrid zeal for the church, and what a horrid loyalty to government, have manifested themselves there! How little do they dream that they could not have dishonoured their idol the Establishment more, and that the great Bishop of souls himself with abhorrence rejects their service! But I have not time to enlarge; —breakfast calls me; and all my post-breakfast time must be given to poetry. Adieu!

Most truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER.

DEAR SIR, Weston Underwood, Sept. 11, 1791.

I HAVE made some alterations in the printed proposals —I should rather say in the wording of them, the reasons of which I need not mention; those for the most material will suggest themselves.

I am very well satisfied with your terms, and shall be glad if the labourer prove worthy of his hire.

I am obliged to you also for liberty given me to draw on you at my pleasure. But my purpose being to leave the bond-money inviolate till time of payment shall arrive, I mean to trouble you at present only with a draft for fifty pounds payable a fortnight after date, which the arrears you mention will make good, whenever paid; that they will be paid is certain,

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though the time when, is not so. When the whole is received there will be a small surplus in your hands, which I will beg you to remit to me without further demand.

I give you a discharge for Mr. Walter Bagot's twenty pounds subscription. Lady Walsingham stands in the list as a simple subscriber, which is a mistake: she sent five guineas.

What do you apprehend will be the effect of Boydell's opposition?

I am, dear Sir, yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 16, 1791.

I AM weary of making you wait for an answer, and therefore resolve to send you one, though without the lines you ask for. Such as they are, they have been long ready; and could I have found a conveyance for them, should have been with you weeks ago. Mr. Bean's last journey to town might have afforded me an opportunity to send them; but he gave me not sufficient notice. They must, therefore, be still delayed, till either he shall go to London again, or somebody else shall offer. I thank you for yours, which are as much better than mine, as gold is better than feathers.

It seemed necessary that I should account for my apparent tardiness to comply with the obliging request of a lady, and of a lady who employed you as her intermedium. None was wanted, as you well assured

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her. But had there been occasion for one, she could not possibly have found a better.

I was much pleased with your account of your visit to Cowslip Green; both for the sake of what you saw there, and because I am sure you must have been as happy in such company, as any situation in this world can make you. Miss More has been always employed, since I first heard of her doings, as becomes a Christian. So she was, while endeavouring to reform the unreformable Great; and so she is, while framing means and opportunities to instruct the more tractable Little. Horace's *Virginibus, puerisque,* may be her motto; but in a sense much nobler than he has annexed to it. I cannot, however, be entirely reconciled to the thought of her being henceforth silent, though even for the sake of her present labours. A pen useful as hers ought not, perhaps, to be laid aside: neither, perhaps, will she altogether renounce it, but when she has established her schools, and habituated them to the discipline she intends, will find it desirable to resume it.—I rejoice that she has a sister like herself, capable of bidding defiance to fatigue and hardship, to dirty roads and wet raiment, in so excellent a cause.

I beg that when you write next to either of those ladies, you will present my best compliments to Miss Martha, and tell her that I can never feel myself flattered more than I was by her application. God knows how unworthy I judge myself, at the same time, to be admitted into a collection of which you are a member. Were there not a crowned head or two to keep me in countenance, I should even blush to think of it.

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I would that I could see some of the mountains which you have seen; especially, because Dr. Johnson has pronounced that no man is qualified to be a poet who has never seen a mountain. But mountains I shall never see, unless, perhaps, in a dream, or unless there are such in heaven. Nor those, unless I receive twice as much mercy as ever yet was shown to any man.

I am now deep in Milton, translating his Latin Poems for a pompous edition, of which you have un-undoubtedly heard. This amuses me for the present, and will for a year or two. So long, I presume, I shall be occupied in the several functions that belong to my present engagement.

Mrs. Unwin and I are about as well as usual; always mindful of you, and always affectionately so. Our united love attends yourself and Miss Catlett.

Believe me most truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 15, 1792.

I THANK you for your remittance; which, to use the language of a song much in use when we were boys,

> Adds fresh beauties to the spring,
> And makes all nature look more gay.

What the author of the song had particularly in view when he thus sang, I know not; but probably it was not the sum of fifty pounds; which, as probably, he never had the happiness to possess. It was, most pro-

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bably, some beautiful nymph,—beautiful in his eyes, at least,—who has long since become an old woman.

I have heard about my wether mutton from various quarters. First, from a sensible little man, curate of a neighbouring village; then from Walter Bagot; then from Henry Cowper; and now from you. It was a blunder hardly pardonable in a man who has lived amid fields and meadows grazed by sheep, almost these thirty years. I have accordingly satirized myself in two stanzas which I composed last night while I lay awake, tormented with pain, and well dosed with laudanum. If you find them not very brilliant, therefore, you will know how to account for it.

Cowper had sinn'd with some excuse,
If, bound in rhyming tethers,
He had committed this abuse
Of changing ewes for wethers;

But, male for female is a trope,
Or rather bold misnomer,
That would have startled even Pope,
When he translated Homer.

Having translated all the Latin and Italian Miltonics, I was proceeding merrily with the Commentary on the Paradise Lost, when I was seized, a week since, with a most tormenting disorder; which has qualified me, however, to make some very feeling observations on that passage when I shall come to it:

——Ill fare our ancestor impure.

For this we may thank Adam;—and you may thank him too, that I am not able to fill my sheet, nor endure a writing posture any longer. I conclude abruptly,

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therefore; but sincerely subscribing myself, with my best compliments to Mrs. Hill,

Your affectionate,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, June 7, 1792.

I SHALL not have opportunity to say much, but lest I should seem slow to acknowledge your last very kind letter, I will say the little that I can.

In the first place I thank you for your most cordial invitation of Mrs. Unwin and myself to Blithfield; but alas! were there no other impediment, such a one has occurred as of itself makes all journeying at this time, and for some time to come, impracticable. Mrs. Unwin has been seized since I received your letter with a disorder that for several days deprived her entirely of the use of her right side, and made her speech so indistinct, as to be almost unintelligible. She is at present somewhat recovered, and daily I hope regains a little strength; but is still so feeble that I have no hope of her complete restoration even to the small share of health she enjoyed before, in less than many weeks; perhaps if I say months, I shall not exceed the occasion. Her illness is a repetition of one with which she was attacked in last December, and she still felt in a degree the effects of the first, when the second affliction found her. As to myself I have suffered nearly the same disability in mind on the occasion, as she in body. All power to study, all thoughts both of Homer and Milton are driven to a distance, and I can do nothing

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at present but watch my poor patient, and administer to her, as I do every day the electrical operation. It seems to be of use in the moment; and she can always articulate better for a time after it is over. But this perceptible benefit is not of very long duration; yet it is reasonable to hope that a remedy in appearance of so much present efficacy, may at length and by frequent repetition, have effects more lasting.

I am truly concerned for your loss of the good Aspasio; but if he were old enough to have been my father, his eleventh hour at least was come, and it was high time that he should be summoned to receive his wages. For you I am concerned, not for him, whose removal to far happier scenes is no subject for lamentation. But as to ourselves, while we are continued here, we cannot but be sensible that the loss of a pious and rational friend makes a void not easily filled.

I am not sufficiently acquainted with the cypress to be sure of the propriety of the epithet wide-spread. Your objection, I dare say, is well founded, and I will either find a better adjunct, or new model the sentence.

Adieu, my dear friend,
With the poor invalid's best compliments,
I remain sincerely yours,
W^M. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. RICHARD POLWHELE.

REV. SIR, Weston Underwood, June 15, 1792.

You will not, I hope, judge the sense that I entertain of my obligation to you by the tardiness of my acknowledgement. That it reaches you so late is no fault of mine, for I received your most acceptable present, the two volumes of poetry by gentlemen of Devonshire and Cornwall, no longer since than yesterday evening. You do me great honour, Sir, in some beautiful lines written by yourself on a blank leaf of the publication, of which, were any other poet than myself the subject of them, I should be proud to have been the author. The chief glory of any poet is to have pleased those whose writings please others, and on this account you may be sure that I shall always set the highest value on the compliment paid me by you.

I am Sir, with much respect,
Your obliged and obedient humble servant,
Wm. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, June 28, 1792.

I am happy in being able to send you a favourable account of my poor patient. Her recovery, though very gradual, is still evident, and some perceptible amendment is made every day. Had the season been less wintry she would probably have amended faster; for during many days in the course of this gloomy

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June, she has been confined by the weather. She walked yesterday however, supported by me and the servant, two and forty times the length of our gravel walk in the orchard; no bad performance for a person who, a month since dragged her foot after her, and could not set the sole to the ground. Her speech too is improved, but not in the same proportion, and at present her right hand is but little serviceable. We continue our electrical operations daily, and have encouragement enough, as you perceive, to do so. To these in fact, more than to any other remedy, I have reason to ascribe her restoration thus far, and with God's blessing hope that they will be the means of completing it.

As to myself, I have the same share of health as usual, but cannot boast of very cheerful spirits. Mrs. Unwin's recovery however is a cordial, which, though not unmixed with fearful apprehensions, enables me to go on tolerably. If I see her as well as she was before this last attack, I shall be as cheerful: till then, I must have fears and anxieties.

* * * *

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 30, 1792.

LIKE you, I am obliged to snatch short opportunities of corresponding with my friends; and to write what I can, not what I would. Your kindness in giving me the first letter after your return, claims my thanks; and my tardiness to answer it would demand an apology,

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if, having been here, and witnessed how much my time is occupied in attendance on my poor patient, you could possibly want one. She proceeds, I trust, in her recovery; but at so slow a rate, that the difference made in a week is hardly perceptible to me, who am always with her. This last night has been the worst she has known since her illness—entirely sleepless till seven in the morning. Such ill rest seems but an indifferent preparation for a long journey, which we purpose to undertake on Wednesday, when we set out for Eartham, on a visit to Mr. Hayley. The journey itself will, I hope, be useful to her; and the air of the sea, blowing over the South Downs, together with the novelty of the scene to us, will, I hope, be serviceable to us both. You may imagine that we, who have been resident on one spot so many years, do not engage in such an enterprise without some anxiety. Persons accustomed to travel, would make themselves merry with mine; it seems so disproportioned to the occasion. Once I have been on the point of determining not to go, and even since we fixed the day; my troubles have been so insupportable. But it has been made a matter of much prayer, and at last it has pleased God to satisfy me, in some measure, that his will corresponds with our purpose, and that He will afford us his protection. You, I know, will not be unmindful of us during our absence from home; but will obtain for us, if your prayers can do it, all that we would ask for ourselves—the presence and favour of God, a salutary effect of our journey, and a safe return.

I rejoiced, and had reason to do so, in your coming

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to Weston, for I think the Lord came with you. Not, indeed, to abide with me; not to restore me to that intercourse with Him which I enjoyed twenty years ago; but to awaken in me, however, more spiritual feeling than I have experienced, except in two instances, during all that time. The comforts that I have received under your ministry, in better days, all rushed upon my recollection; and, during two or three transient moments, seemed to be in a degree renewed. You will tell me that transient as they were, they were yet evidences of a love that is not so; and I am desirous to believe it.

With Mrs. Unwin's warm remembrances, and my cousin Johnson's best compliments, I am

Sincerely yours,

WM. COWPER.

P. S.—If I hear from you while I am abroad, your letter will find me at William Hayley's, Esq., Eartham, near Chichester. We purpose to return in about a month.

TO MRS. COURTENEY, WESTON-UNDERWOOD.

MY DEAR CATHARINA, Eartham, Sept. 10, 1792.

I AM not so uncourteous a knight as to leave your last kind letter, and the last I hope that I shall receive for a long time to come, without an attempt, at least, to acknowledge and to send you something in the shape of an answer to it; but having been obliged to dose myself last night with laudanum, on account of a little nervous fever, to which I am always subject, and for

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which I find it the best remedy, I feel myself this morning particularly under the influence of Lethean vapours, and, consequently, in danger of being uncommonly stupid!

You could hardly have sent me intelligence that would have gratified me more than that of my two dear friends, Sir John and Lady Throckmorton, having departed from Paris two days before the terrible 10th of August. I have had many anxious thoughts on their account; and am truly happy to learn that they have sought a more peaceful region, while it was yet permitted them to do so. They will not, I trust, revisit those scenes of tumult and horror while they shall continue to merit that description. We are here all of one mind respecting the cause in which the Parisians are engaged; wish them a free people, and as happy as they can wish themselves. But their conduct has not always pleased us: we are shocked at their sanguinary proceedings, and begin to fear, myself in particular, that they will prove themselves unworthy, because incapable of enjoying it, of the inestimable blessings of liberty. My daily toast is, Sobriety and Freedom to the French; for they seem as destitute of the former, as they are eager to secure the latter.

We still hold our purpose of leaving Eartham on the 17th; and again my fears on Mrs. Unwin's account begin to trouble me; but they are now not quite so reasonable as in the first instance. If she could bear the fatigue of travelling then, she is more equal to it at present; and supposing that nothing happens to alarm her, which is very probable, may be expected to reach Weston in much better condition

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than when she left it. Her improvement, however, is chiefly in her looks, and in the articles of speaking and walking; for she can neither rise from her chair without help, nor walk without a support; nor read, nor use her needles. Give my love to the good Doctor, and make him acquainted with the state of his patient, since he, of all men, seems to have the best right to know it.

I am proud that you are pleased with the Epitaph I sent you, and shall be still prouder to see it perpetuated by the chisel. It is all that I have done since here I came, and all that I have been able to do. I wished, indeed, to have requited Romney for his well-drawn copy of me, in rhyme; and have more than once or twice attempted it: but I find, like the man in the fable, who could leap only at Rhodes, that verse is almost impossible to me except at Weston.—Tell my friend George that I am every day mindful of him, and always love him; and bid him by no means to vex himself about the tardiness of Andrews. Remember me affectionately to William, and to Pitcairn, whom I shall hope to find with you at my return; and should you see Mr. Buchanan, to him also.—I have now charged you with commissions enow, and having added Mrs. Unwin's best compliments and told you that I long to see you again, will conclude myself,

My dear Catharina,

Most truly yours,

W^M. COWPER.

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TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY, Nov. 5, 1792.

I HAVE done nothing since you went, except that I have finished the Sonnet which I told you I had begun, and sent it to Hayley, who is well pleased *therewith*, and has by this time transmitted it to whom it most concerns.

I would not give the algebraist sixpence for his encomiums on my Task, if he condemns my Homer, which, I know in point of language is equal to it, and in variety of numbers superior. But the character of the former having been some years established, he follows the general cry; and should Homer establish himself as well, and I trust he will hereafter, I shall have his warm suffrage for that also. But if not—it is no matter. Swift says somewhere,—There are a few good judges of poetry in the world, who lend their taste to those who have none: and your man of figures is probably one of the borrowers.

Adieu—in great haste. Our united love attends yourself and yours, whose I am

Most truly and affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston Underwood, Nov. 8, 1792.

MY journey to Sussex was not, as you suppose, a poetical journey; for Orpheus himself would never have succeeded in an attempt to draw me so far from home.

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But it was a journey of obligation. Hayley was here when Mrs. Unwin was taken ill, and discovered on that occasion so much affectionate attention both to her and to me, and seemed to take such an uncommon interest in us both, that when he earnestly invited us to Eartham, on a supposition of her recovery, it was impossible not to comply. We promised accordingly, and accordingly we went. What his book may be I know not; but this I know, that men are seldom either so good or so bad as their books represent them; and I learn likewise that if his book furnishes ground to suspect him of a bad heart, it does him great injustice, for a more friendly one, or more under the constant influence of human kindness, dwells not in a human bosom.

Obligation however was not the sole motive of my journey. His place is not very distant from the sea, and I had hopes that the air of such a country might be peculiarly beneficial to Mrs. Unwin. The hope was not altogether frustrated, nor was it indeed fulfilled to the extent that I wished. She is returned considerably improved in her health, but by no means so well as before her last indisposition seized her, not being able yet to rise from her seat, or to walk without assistance.

As for myself, I have not been so well these many months as when you saw me. My spirits have been more depressed than is common, even with me; and the winter now beginning, threatens me that I shall not soon be better. But cheerful or sad, and whether you are jealous or not, I am always sincerely and affectionately, Yours,

W^m. COWPER.

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TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Jan. 31, 1793.

Io Pæan!

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

EVEN as you foretold, so it came to pass. On Tuesday I received your letter, and on Tuesday came the pheasants; for which I am indebted in many thanks, as well as Mrs. Unwin, both to your kindness and to your kind friend Mr. Copeman.

> In Copeman's ear this truth let Echo tell,—
> "Immortal bards like mortal pheasants well:"
> And when his clerkship's out, I wish him herds
> Of golden clients for his golden birds.

Our friends the Courtenays have never dined with us since their marriage, *because* we have never asked them; and we have never asked them, *because* poor Mrs. Unwin is not so equal to the task of providing for and entertaining company as before this last illness. But this is no objection to the arrival here of a bustard; rather it is a cause for which we shall be particularly glad to see the monster. It will be a handsome present to *them*. So let the bustard come, as the Lord Mayor of London said to the hare, when he was hunting,—let her come, a' God's name: I am not afraid of her.

Adieu, my dear cousin and caterer. My eyes terribly bad; else I had much more to say to you.

Ever affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

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TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 29, 1793.

YOUR tidings concerning the slender pittance yet to come, are, as you observe, of the melancholy cast. Not being gifted by nature with the means of acquiring much, it is well, however, that she has given me a disposition to be contented with little. I have now been so many years habituated to small matters, that I should probably find myself incommoded by greater; and may I but be enabled to shift, as I have been hitherto, unsatisfied wishes will never trouble me much. My pen has helped me somewhat; and, after some years' toil, I begin to reap the benefit. Had I begun sooner, perhaps I should have known fewer pecuniary distresses; or, who can say? It is possible that I might not have succeeded so well. Fruit ripens only a short time before it rots; and man, in general, arrives not at maturity of mental powers at a much earlier period. I am now busied in preparing Homer for his second appearance. An author should consider himself as bound not to please himself, but the public; and so far as the good pleasure of the public may be learned from the critics, I design to accommodate myself to it. The Latinisms, though employed by Milton, and numbered by Addison among the arts and expedients by which he has given dignity to his style, I shall render into plain English; the rougher lines, though my reason for using them has never been proved a bad one, so far as I know, I shall make perfectly smooth; and shall give body and substance to

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all that is in any degree feeble and flimsy. And when I have done all this, and more, if the critics still grumble, I shall say the very deuce is in them. Yet, that they will grumble, I make no doubt; for, unreasonable as it is to do so, they all require something better than Homer, and that something they will certainly never get from me.

As to the canal that is to be my neighbour, I hear little about it. The Courtenays of Weston have nothing to do with it, and I have no intercourse with Tyringham. When it is finished, the people of these parts will have to carry their coals seven miles only, which now they bring from Northampton or Bedford, both at the distance of fifteen. But, as Balaam says, who shall live when these things are done? It is not for me, a sexagenarian already, to expect that I shall. The chief objection to canals in general seems to be, that, multiplying as they do, they are likely to swallow the coasting trade.

I cannot tell you the joy I feel at the disappointment of the French; pitiful mimics of Spartan and Roman virtue, without a grain of it in their whole character.

Ever yours,

W^M. COWPER.

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TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 12, 1793.

You promise to be contented with a short line, and a short one you must have, hurried over in the little interval I have happened to find between the conclusion of my morning task and breakfast. Study has this good effect at least: it makes me an early riser, who might otherwise, perhaps, be as much given to dozing as my readers.

The scanty opportunity I have, I shall employ in telling you what you principally wish to be told—the present state of mine and Mrs. Unwin's health. In her I cannot perceive any alteration for the better; and must be satisfied, I believe, as indeed I have great reason to be, if she does not alter for the worse. She uses the orchard-walk daily, but always supported between two, and is still unable to employ herself as formerly. But she is cheerful, seldom in much pain, and has always strong confidence in the mercy and faithfulness of God.

As to myself, I have always the same song to sing —Well in body, but sick in spirit: sick, nigh unto death.

> Seasons return, but not to me returns
> God, or the sweet approach of heavenly day,
> Or sight of cheering truth, or pardon seal'd,
> Or joy, or hope, or Jesus' face divine;
> But cloud, &c.

I could easily set my complaint to Milton's tone, and accompany him through the whole passage, on the

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subject of a blindness more deplorable than his; but time fails me.

I feel great desire to see your intended publication; a desire which the manner in which Mr. Bull speaks of it, who called here lately, has no tendency to allay. I believe I forgot to thank you for your last poetical present: not because I was not much pleased with it, but I write always in a hurry, and in a hurry must now conclude myself, with our united love,

Yours, my dear friend,

Most sincerely,

W^M. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN JOHNSON.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY, Aug. 2, 1793.

THE Bishop of Norwich has won my heart by his kind and liberal behaviour to you; and, if I knew him, I would tell him so.

I am glad that your auditors find your voice strong, and your utterance distinct; glad, too, that your doctrine has hitherto made you no enemies. You have a gracious Master, who, it seems, will not suffer you to see war in the beginning. It will be a wonder, however, if you do not, sooner or later, find out that sore place in every heart which can ill endure the touch of apostolic doctrine. Somebody will smart in his conscience, and you will hear of it. I say not this, my dear Johnny, to terrify, but to prepare you for that which is likely to happen, and which, troublesome as it may prove, is yet devoutly to be wished; for, in

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general, there is little good done by preachers till the world begins to abuse them. But understand me aright. I do not mean that you should give them unnecessary provocation, by scolding and railing at them, as some, more zealous than wise, are apt to do. That were to deserve their anger. No; there is no need of it. The self-abasing doctrines of the gospel will, of themselves, create you enemies; but remember this, for your comfort—they will also, in due time, transform them into friends, and make them love you, as if they were your own children. God give you many such; as, if you are faithful to his cause, I trust he will!

Sir John and Lady Throckmorton have lately arrived in England, and are now at the Hall. They have brought me from Rome a set of engravings on Odyssey subjects, by Flaxman, whom you have heard Hayley celebrate. They are very fine, very much in the antique style, and a present from the Dowager Lady Spencer.

Ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, Oct. 22, 1793.

YOU are very kind to apologize for a short letter, instead of reproaching me with having been so long entirely silent. I persuaded myself, however, that while you were on your journey, you would miss me less as a correspondent than you do when you are at home,

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and therefore allowed myself to pursue my literary labours only, but still purposing to write as soon as I should have reason to judge you returned to London. Hinderances, however, to the execution even of that purpose, have interposed; and at this moment I write in the utmost haste, as indeed I always do, partly because I never begin a letter till I am already fatigued with study, and partly through fear of interruption before I can possibly finish it.

I rejoice that you have travelled so much to your satisfaction. As to me, my travelling days, I believe, are over. Our journey of last year was less beneficial, both to Mrs. Unwin's health and my spirits, than I hoped it might be; and we are hardly rich enough to migrate in quest of pleasure merely.

I thank you much for your last publication, which I am reading, as fast as I can snatch opportunity, to Mrs. Unwin. We have found it, as far as we have gone, both interesting and amusing; and I never cease to wonder at the fertility of your invention, that, shut up as you were in your vessel, and disunited from the rest of mankind, could yet furnish you with such variety, and with the means likewise, of saying the same thing in so many different ways.

Sincerely yours,

W^m^. COWPER.

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TO MRS. CHARLOTTE SMITH.

DEAR MADAM, Weston-Und^{d}, Oct. 26, 1793.

YOUR two counsellors are of one mind. We both are of opinion that you will do well to make your second volume a suitable companion to the first, by embellishing it in the same manner; and have no doubt, considering the well-deserved popularity of your verse, that the expense will be amply refunded by the public.

I would give you, Madam, not my counsel only, but consolation also, were I not disqualified for that delightful service by a great dearth of it in my own experience. I too, often seek but cannot find it. Of this however I can assure you, if that may at all comfort you, that both my friend Hayley and myself most truly sympathize with you under all your sufferings; neither have you, I am persuaded, in any degree lost the interest you always had in him, or your claim to any service of whatever kind that it may be in his power to render you. Had you no other title to his esteem, his respect for your talents and his feelings for your misfortunes must insure to you the friendship of such a man for ever. I know, however, that there are seasons when, look which way we will, we see the same dismal gloom enveloping all objects. This is itself an affliction, and the worse because it makes us think ourselves more unhappy than we are; and at such a season it is, I doubt not, that you suspect a diminution of our friend's zeal to serve you.

I was much struck by an expression in your letter to Hayley where you say that "you will endeavour to take an interest in green leaves again." This seems

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the sound of my own voice reflected to me from a distance, I have so often had the same thought and desire. A day scarcely passes at this season of the year when I do not contemplate the trees so soon to be stript, and say, perhaps I shall never see you clothed again; every year as it passes makes this expectation more reasonable, and the year, with me, cannot be very distant when the event will verify it. Well—may God grant us a good hope of arriving in due time where the leaves never fall, and all will be right.

Mrs. Unwin I think is a little better than when you saw her, but still feeble; so feeble as to keep me in a state of continual apprehension. I live under the point of a sword suspended by a hair. She begs you to accept her compliments.

Adieu, my dear madam, believe me
Your sincere and affectionate humble servant,
WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Dec. 10, 1793.

You mentioned, my dear friend, in your last letter, an unfavourable sprain that you had received, which you apprehended might be very inconvenient to you for some time to come; and having learned also from Lady Hesketh the same unwelcome intelligence, in terms still more alarming than those in which you related the accident yourself, I cannot but be anxious, as well as my cousin, to know the present state of it; and shall truly rejoice to hear that it is in a state of

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recovery. Give us a line of information on this subject, as soon as you can conveniently, and you will much oblige us.

I write by morning candle-light; my literary business obliging me to be an early riser. Homer demands me: finished, indeed, but the alterations not transcribed; a work to which I am now hastening as fast as possible. The transcript ended, which is likely to amount to a good sizeable volume, I must write a new preface; and then farewell to Homer for ever! And if the remainder of my days be a little gilded with the profits of this long and laborious work, I shall not regret the time that I have bestowed on it.

I remain, my dear friend,
affectionately yours,
WM. COWPER.

Can you give us any news of Lord Howe's Armada; concerning which we may enquire, as our forefathers did of the Spanish,—"*An in cœlum sublata sit, an in Tartarum depressa?*"

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PAPERS

IN

THE CONNOISSEUR.

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PAPERS

IN

THE CONNOISSEUR.

1756.

No. 111. BILLY SUCKLING.

Tandem desine matrem. HOR.

With dear mamma O make not such a pother!
But strive to be a man before your mother.

THE generality of the young unmarried ladies of the present age dislike no company so much as the elderly persons of their own sex, whether married or unmarried. Going with an old maiden aunt, a mamma, or grand-mamma to the play, or to Ranelagh, is so insipid an amusement, that it robs their entertainment of the very name of a party of pleasure. To be handed into a box, walk in the public gardens, or make one at a card-table at a route, with a sprightly young nobleman, or gallant colonel of the guards, has some life in it; but to be kept perpetually under the wing of an old lady, can have no charms for a woman of spirit. The presence of these antiquated females, imposes a constraint on their behaviour: they are, indeed, like

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the duennas in Spain, spies on the conduct of the gay and young; and a good old gentlewoman, with a blooming beauty by her side, watches her every motion, and is as much frighted, if the pretty creature makes any advances to a man, as a hen, who has been foster-mother to a brood of ducklings, is alarmed at their taking to the water.

This loose coquet behaviour so much in vogue, and consequently so genteel, has, I must own, no charms in my eye, as a modest deportment appears to me most natural and becoming in the fair sex; and I am always glad to see a young lady of sufficient sense and discretion, to behave with an innocent cheerfulness, instead of apparent uneasiness and constraint, before her more aged female friends and relations. But though a daughter should prefer no company to her mother, a son, always dangling at the side of his mamma, would appear as ridiculous, as if he wore his sister's petticoats: and however amiable this maidenly demeanor might seem in a young girl, I cannot view it with equal approbation in the character of a male-virgin;—a character, with which I shall here present the reader, as drawn by one of my correspondents.

TO MR. TOWN.

SIR,

You have already given us several instances of those ambiguous creatures among the men, who are both male and female; permit me to add to them an account of those lady-like gentlemen, whom we may distinguish by the title of *their mother's own sons;* who have in vain changed the bib and leading-strings

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for the breeches, and stick as close to their mammas, as a great calf to the side of an old cow. I am intimately acquainted with one of these overgrown babies; who is indeed too big to be dandled in lap, or fed with a pap-spoon, though he is no more weaned from his mother, than if he had not yet quitted the nursery.

The delicate Billy Suckling is the contempt of the men, the jest of the women, and the darling of his mamma. She doats on him to distraction; and is in perpetual admiration of his wit, and anxiety for his health. The good young gentleman, for his part, is neither undutiful nor ungrateful: she is the only woman that he does not look on with indifference; and she is his tutoress, his physician, and his nurse. She provides his broth every evening; will not suffer him to look into a book by candle-light, lest he should hurt his eyes; and takes care to have his bed warmed: nay, I have known him sit with his mamma's white handkerchief round his neck through a whole visit, to guard him from the wind of that *ugly door*, or that *terrible chink in the wainscot.*

But however familiarly he may behave in his addresses to his mother, and whatever little acts of gallantry may pass between them, no encouragement can prevail on him to treat other women with the same freedom. Being once desired at a ball to dance a minuet, instead of taking out any of the young ladies, he could pitch upon no partner so agreeable, to whom he might offer the compliment of his hand, as his mother; and I remember, when he was once called upon in a large company at a tavern to give a lady in his turn, he plainly showed who was the sole

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mistress of his affections, by toasting his mother. The gallant custom of challenging a lady to drink a bumper, by leaving it to her option whether she will have *hob* or *nob*, frequently gives a delicious flavour to the liquor, especially when, as I have known it happen, joining the lips of the glasses has proved a prelude to a meeting between the lips of the parties: but he could not be prevailed on to accept a glass of claret from the fairest hand, though a kiss were sure to follow it. I have known him so very nice, as to refuse a glass of sack filled with walnuts, which had been peeled by the snowy fingers of a beautiful young lady; though I have seen him smack his lips after a glass of raisin wine, in which his prudent mother had been dabbling with her snuffy finger, in order to fish out the small particles of cork, which might possibly have choaked him. If a lady drops her fan, he sits without any emotion, and suffers her to stoop for it herself; or if she strikes her tea-cup against the saucer to give notice that it is empty, he pays no regard to the signal, but sees her walk up to the tea-table, without stirring from his chair. He would rather leave the most celebrated beauty, in crossing the street, to the mercy of a drayman, than trust her with his little finger: though at the same time should his mother be so distressed, he would not scruple to bear as much of her weight as he could stand under, and to redeem her silk stockings from jeopardy, would even expose his own.

One would imagine, that this extreme coyness and reserve, in which he so remarkably differs from the generality of his own sex, would in another respect as

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effectually distinguish him from the generality of women: I mean, that being less polite in his address than a footman, we should hardly expect to find him more loquacious than a chambermaid. But this is really the case: suffer him to take the lead in conversation, and there are certain topics, in which the most prating gossip at a christening would find it difficult to cope with him. The strength of his constitution is his favourite theme: he is constantly attempting to prove that he is not susceptible of the least injury from cold; though a hoarseness in his voice, and the continual interruptions of a consumptive cough, give him the lie in his throat at the end of every sentence. The instances, indeed, by which he endeavours to prove his hardiness, unluckily rather tend to convince us of the delicacy of his frame, as they seldom amount to more than his having kicked off the bed-clothes in his sleep, laid aside one of his flannel waistcoats in a hot day, or tried on a new pair of pumps, before they had been sufficiently aired. For the truth of these facts he always appeals to his mamma, who vouches for him with a sigh, and protests that his carelessness would ruin the constitution of a horse.

I am now coming to the most extraordinary part of his character. This pusillanimous creature thinks himself, and would be thought, a buck. The noble fraternity of that order find, that their reputation can be no otherwise maintained, than by prevailing on an Irish chairman now and then to favour them with a broken head, or by conferring the same token of their esteem on the unarmed and defenceless waiters at a tavern. But these feats are by no means suited to the

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disposition of our hero: and yet he always looks upon his harmless exploits as the bold frolics of a buck. If he escaps a nervous fever a month, he is quite a buck: if he walks home after it is dark, without his mamma's maid to attend him, he is quite a buck: if he sits up an hour later than his usual time, or drinks a glass or two of wine without water, he calls it a debauch; and because his head does not ache the next morning, he is quite a buck. In short, a woman of the least spirit within the precints of St. James's would demolish him in a week, should he pretend to keep pace with her in her irregularities; and yet he is ever dignifying himself with the appellation of a buck.

Now might it not be giving this gentleman a useful hint, Mr. Town, to assure him, that while milk and water is his darling liquor, a bamboo cane his club, and his mother the sole object of his affections, the world will never join him in denominating him a buck: that if he fails in this attempt, he is absolutely excluded from every order in society; for whatever his deserts may be, no assembly of antiquated virgins can ever acknowledge him for sister, nature having as deplorably disqualified him for that rank in the community, as he has disqualified himself for every other: and that, though he never can arrive at the dignity of leading apes in hell, he may possibly be condemned to dangle in that capacity, at the apron-string of an old maid in the next world, for having so abominably resembled one in this.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

W. C.

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No. 115. COMPLAINTS OF AN OLD BACHELOR.

—— *Cœlebs quid agam?*—— HOR.

With an old bachelor how things miscary!
What shall I do? go hang myself? or marry?

TO MR. TOWN.

SIR, April 5, 1756.

No man is a sincerer friend to innocent pleasantry, or more desirous of promoting it, than myself. Raillery of every kind, provided it be confined within due bounds, is, in my opinion, an excellent ingredient in conversation; and I am never displeased, if I can contribute to the harmless mirth of the company, by being myself the subject of it: but, in good truth, I have neither a fortune, a constitution, nor a temper, that will enable me to chuckle and shake my sides, while I suffer more from the festivity of my friends, than the spleen or malice of my enemies could possibly inflict upon me; nor do I see any reason, why I should so far move the mirthful indignation of the ladies, as to be teased and worried to death in mere sport, for no earthly reason, but that I am what the world calls an Old Bachelor.

The female part of my acquaintance entertain an odd opinion, that a Bachelor is not in fact a rational creature; at least, that he has not the sense of feeling in common with the rest of mankind; that a Bachelor may be beaten like a stock-fish; that you may thrust

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pins into his legs, and wring him by the nose; in short, that you cannot take too many liberties with a Bachelor. I am at a loss to conceive on what foundation these romping philosophers have grounded their hypothesis, though at the same time I am a melancholy proof of its existence, as well as of its absurdity.

A friend of mine, whom I frequently visit, has a wife and three daughters, the youngest of which has persecuted me these ten years. These ingenious young ladies have not only found out the sole end and purpose of my being themselves, but have likewise communicated their discovery to all the girls in the neighbourhood; so that, if they happen at any time to be apprized of my coming, (which I take all possible care to prevent) they immediately dispatch half a dozen cards to their faithful allies, to beg the favour of their company to drink coffee, and *help teaze* Mr. Ironside. Upon these occasions, my entry into the room is sometimes obstructed by a cord, fastened across the bottom of the door case; which, as I am a little near-sighted, I seldom discover, till it has brought me upon my knees before them. While I am employed in brushing the dust from my black rollers, or chafing my broken shins, my wig is suddenly conveyed away, and either stuffed behind the looking-glass, or tossed from one to the other so dexterously and with such velocity, that, after many a fruitless attempt to recover it, I am obliged to sit down bareheaded, to the great diversion of the spectators. The last time I found myself in these distressful circumstances, the eldest girl, a sprightly mischievous jade, stepped briskly up to me, and promised to restore my

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wig, if I would play her a tune on a small flute she held in her hand. I instantly applied it to my lips, and blowing lustily into it, to my inconceivable surprise, was immediately choaked and blinded with a cloud of soot, that issued from every hole in the instrument. The younger part of the company declared I had not executed the conditions, and refused to surrender my wig; but the father, who has a rough kind of facetiousness about him, insisted on its being delivered up; and protested that he never knew the Black Joke better performed in his life.

I am naturally a quiet inoffensive animal, and not easily ruffled; yet I shall never submit to these indignities with patience, till I am satisfied I deserve them. Even the old maids of my acquaintance, who, one would think might have a fellow-feeling for a brother in distress, conspire with their nieces to harass and torment me: and it is not many nights since Miss Diana Grizzle utterly spoiled the only superfine suit I have in the world, by pinning the skirts of it together with a red-hot poker. I own my resentment of this injury was so strong, that I determined to punish it by kissing the offender, which in cool blood I should never have attempted. The satisfaction, however, which I obtained by this imprudent revenge, was much like what a man of honour feels on finding himself run through the body by the scoundrel who had offended him. My upper lip was transfixed with a large corkin pin which in the scuffle she had conveyed into her mouth; and I doubt not, that I shall carry the *memorem labris notam* (the mark of this Judas-kiss) from an old maid to the grave with me.

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These misfortunes, or others of the same kind, I encounter daily: but at these seasons of the year, which give a sanction to this kind of practical wit, and when every man thinks he has a right to entertain himself at his friend's expense, I live in hourly apprehensions of more mortifying adventures. No miserable dunghill cock, devoted a victim to the wanton cruelty of the mob, would be more terrified at the approach of a Shrove Tuesday, were he endued with human reason and forecast, than I am at the approach of a merry Christmas, or the first of April. No longer ago than last Thursday, which was the latter of these festivals, I was pestered with mortifying presents from the ladies; obliged to pay the carriage of half a dozen oyster-barrels stuffed with brick-bats, and ten packets by the post containing nothing but old newspapers. But what vexed me the most, was the being sent fifty miles out of town, on that day, by a counterfeit express from a dying relation.

I could not help reflecting, with a sigh, on the resemblance between the imaginary grievance of poor Tom in the tragedy of Lear, and those which I really experienced. I, like him, was led through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; and though knives were not laid under my pillow, minced horse-hair was strewed upon my sheets: like him, I was made to ride on a hard-trotting horse through the most dangerous ways, and found, at the end of my journey, that I had only been coursing my own shadow.

As much a sufferer as I am by the behaviour of the women in general, I must not forget to remark, that the pertness and sauciness of an old maid is particu-

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larly offensive to me. I cannot help thinking, that the virginity of these ancient misses is at least as ridiculous as my own celibacy. If I am to be condemned for having never made an offer, they are as much to blame for having never accepted one: if I am to be derided for having never married, who never attempted to make a conquest; they are more properly the objects of derision, who are still unmarried, after having made so many. Numberless are the proposals they have rejected, according to their own account: and they are eternally boasting of the havock they have formerly made among the knights, baronets, and 'squires, at Bath, Tunbridge, and Epsom; while a tattered madrigal perhaps, a snip of hair, or the portrait of a cherry-cheeked gentleman in a milk-white periwig, are the only remaining proofs of those beauties, which are now withered like the short-lived rose, and have only left the virgin thorn remaining.

Believe me, Mr. Town, I am almost afraid to trust you with the publication of this epistle: the ladies, whom I last mentioned, will be so exasperated on reading it, that I must expect no quarter at their hands for the future; since they are generally as little inclined to forgiveness in their old age, as they were to pity and compassion in their youth. One expedient, however, is left me, which, if put in execution, will effectually screen me from their resentment.

I shall be happy, therefore, if by your means I may be permitted to inform the ladies, that as fusty an animal as they think me, it is not impossible but by a little gentler treatment than I have hitherto met with, I may be humanized into a husband. As an induce-

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ment to them to relieve me from my present uneasy circumstances, you may assure them, that I am rendered so exceeding tractable by the very severe discipline I have undergone, that they may mould and fashion me to their minds with ease; and consequently, that by marrying me, a woman will save herself all that trouble, which a wife of any spirit is obliged to take with an unruly husband, who is absurd enough to expect from her a strict performance of the marriage vow, even in the very minute article of obedience: that, so far from contradicting a lady, I shall be mighty well satisfied if she contents herself with contradicting me: that, if I happen at any time inadvertently to thwart her inclinations, I shall think myself rightly served, if she boxes my ears, spits in my face, or treads upon my corns: that if I approach her lips when she is not in a kissing humour, I shall expect she will bite me by the nose; or, if I take her by the hand in an improper season, that she will instantly begin to pinch, scratch, and claw, and apply her fingers to those purposes which they were certainly intended by nature to fulfil. Add to these accomplishments, so requisite to make the married state happy, that I am not much turned of fifty, can tie on my cravat, fasten a button, or mend a hole in my stocking without any assistance.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,
CHRISTOPHER IRONSIDE.

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No. 119. ON KEEPING A SECRET.

Plenus rimarum sum, huc et illuc perfluo. TER.
Leaky at bottom; if those chinks you stop,
In vain;—the Secret will run o'er at top.

THERE is no mark of our confidence taken more kindly by a friend, than the intrusting him with a secret; nor any which he is so likely to abuse. Confidants in general are like crazy fire-locks, which are no sooner charged and cocked, than the spring gives way, and the report immediately follows. Happy to have been thought worthy the confidence of one friend, they are impatient to manifest their importance to another: till between them and their friend, and their friend's friend, the whole matter is presently known to *all our friends round the Wrekin.* The secret catches, as it were, by contact, and like electrical matter breaks forth from every link in the chain, almost at the same instant. Thus the whole Exchange may be thrown into a buz to-morrow, by what was whispered in the middle of Marlborough Downs this morning; and in a week's time the streets may ring with the intrigue of a woman of fashion, bellowed out from the foul mouths of the hawkers, though at present it is known to no creature living, but her gallant and her waiting-maid.

As the talent of secrecy is of so great importance to society, and the necessary commerce between indi-

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viduals cannot be securely carried on without it, that this deplorable weakness should be so general is much to be lamented. You may as well pour water into a funnel, or a sieve, and expect it to be retained there, as commit any of your concerns to so slippery a companion. It is remarkable, that in those men who have thus lost the faculty of retention, the desire of being communicative is always most prevalent where it is least to be justified. If they are entrusted with a matter of no great moment, affairs of more consequence will perhaps in a few hours shuffle it entirely out of their thoughts: but if any thing be delivered to them with an air of earnestness, a low voice, and the gesture of a man in terror for the consequence of its being known; if the door is bolted, and every precaution taken to prevent a surprise; however they may promise secrecy, and however they may intend it, the weight upon their minds will be so extremely oppressive, that it will certainly put their tongues in motion.

This breach of trust, so universal amongst us, is perhaps in great measure owing to our education. The first lesson our little masters and misses are taught, is to become blabs and tell-tales: they are bribed to divulge the petty intrigues of the family below stairs to papa and mamma in the parlour, and a doll or a hobby-horse is generally the encouragement of a propensity, which could scarcely be atoned for by a whipping. As soon as children can lisp out the little intelligence they have picked up in the hall or the kitchen, they are admired for their wit: if the butler has been caught kissing the housekeeper in his pantry, or the footman detected in romping with the

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chambermaid, away flies little Tommy or Betsy with the news; the parents are lost in admiration of the pretty rogue's understanding, and reward such uncommon ingenuity with a kiss or a sugar-plum.

Nor does an inclination to secrecy meet with less encouragement at school. The governantes at the boarding-school teach miss to be a good girl, and tell them every thing she knows: thus, if any young lady is unfortunately discovered eating a green apple in a corner, if she is heard to pronounce a naughty word, or is caught picking the letters out of another miss's sampler, away runs the chit, who is so happy as to get the start of the rest, screams out her information as she goes; and the prudent matron chucks her under the chin, and tells her that she is a good girl, and every body will love her.

The management of our young gentlemen is equally absurd: in most of our schools, if a lad is discovered in a scrape, the impeachment of an accomplice, as at the Old Bailey, is made the condition of a pardon. I remember a boy, engaged in robbing an orchard, who was unfortunately taken prisoner in an apple tree, and conducted, under the strong guard of the farmer and his dairy-maid, to the master's house. Upon his absolute refusal to discover his associates, the pedagogue undertook to lash him out of his fidelity; but finding it impossible to scourge the secret out of him, he at last gave him up for an obstinate villain, and sent him to his father, who told him he was ruined, and was going to disinherit him for not betraying his schoolfellows. I must own I am not fond of thus drubbing our youth into treachery; and am much more pleased

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with the request of Ulysses, when he went to Troy, who begged of those who were to have the charge of Telemachus, that they would above all things, teach him to be just, sincere, faithful, and *to keep a secret.*

Every man's experience must have furnished him with instances of confidants who are not to be relied on, and friends who are not to be trusted; but few perhaps have thought it a character so well worth their attention, as to have marked out the different degrees into which it may be divided, and the different methods by which secrets are communicated.

Ned Trusty is a tell-tale of a very singular kind. Having some sense of his duty, he hesitates a little at the breach of it. If he engages never to utter a syllable, he most punctually performs his promise; but then he has the knack of insinuating by a nod and a shrug well-timed, or a seasonable leer, as much as others can convey in express terms. It is difficult, in short, to determine, whether he is more to be admired for his resolution in not mentioning, or his ingenuity in disclosing a secret. He is also excellent at a "doubtful phrase," as Hamlet calls it, or an "ambiguous giving out;" and his conversation consists chiefly of such broken inuendoes, as

> Well, I know—or, I could—an if I would—
> Or, if I list to speak—or, there be, an if there might, &c.

Here he generally stops; and leaves it to his hearers to draw proper inferences from these piece-meal premises. With due encouragement, however, he may be prevailed on to slip the padlock from his lips, and immediately overwhelms you with a torrent of secret

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history, which rushes forth with more violence for having been so long confined.

Poor Meanwell, though he never fails to transgress, is rather to be pitied than condemned. To trust him with a secret, is to spoil his appetite, to break his rest, and to deprive him for a time of every earthly enjoyment. Like a man who travels with his whole fortune in his pocket, he is terrified if you approach him, and immediately suspects that you come with a felonious intent to rob him of his charge. If he ventures abroad, it is to walk in some unfrequented place where he is least in danger of an attack. At home, he shuts himself up from his family, paces to and fro in his chamber, and has no relief but from muttering over to himself, what he longs to publish to the world; and would gladly submit to the office of town-crier, for the liberty of proclaiming it in the market-place. At length, however, weary of his burthen, and resolved to bear it no longer, he consigns it to the custody of the first friend he meets, and returns to his wife with a cheerful aspect, and wonderfully altered for the better.

Careless is perhaps equally undesigning, though not equally excusable. Intrust him with an affair of the utmost importance, on the concealment of which your fortune and happiness depend: he hears you with a kind of half-attention, whistles a favourite air, and accompanies it with the drumming of his fingers upon the table. As soon as your narration is ended, or perhaps in the middle of it, he asks your opinion of his sword-knot, damns his tailor for having dressed him in a snuff-coloured coat, instead of a *pompadour*,

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and leaves you in haste to attend an auction; where, as if he meant to dispose of his intelligence to the best bidder, he divulges it, with a voice as loud as the auctioneer's: and when you tax him with having played you false, he is heartily sorry for it, but never knew that it was to be a secret.

To these I might add the character of the open and unreserved, who thinks it a breach of friendship to conceal any thing from his intimates; and the impertinent, who having by dint of observation made himself master of your secret, imagines he may lawfully publish the knowledge it cost him so much labour to obtain, and considers that privilege as the reward due to his industry. But I shall leave these, with many other characters, which my reader's own experience may suggest to him, and conclude with prescribing, as a short remedy for this evil,—That no man may betray the council of his friend, let every man keep his own.

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No. 134. LETTER FROM MR. VILLAGE.

Delicta majorum immeritus lues,
Romane, donec templa refeceris
Ædesqua labentes Deorum, et
Fœda nigro simulacra fumo. HOR.

The tottering tower and mouldering walls repair,
And fill with decency the house of prayer:
Quick to the needy curate bring relief,
And deck the parish church without a brief.

MR. VILLAGE TO MR. TOWN.

DEAR COUSIN,

THE country at present, no less than the metropolis, abounding with politicians of every kind, I began to despair of picking up any intelligence, that might possibly be entertaining to your readers. However, I have lately visited some of the most distant parts of the kingdom with a clergyman of my acquaintance: I shall not trouble you with an account of the improvements that have been made in the seats we saw according to the modern taste, but proceed to give you some reflections, which occurred to us on observing several country churches, and the behaviour of their congregations.

The ruinous condition of some of these edifices gave me great offence; and I could not help wishing, that the honest vicar, instead of indulging his genius for improvements, by enclosing his gooseberry-bushes within a Chinese rail, and converting half an acre of

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his glebe-land into a bowling-green, would have applied part of his income to the more laudable purpose, of sheltering his parishioners from the weather during their attendance on divine service. It is no uncommon thing to see the parsonage-house well thatched, and in exceeding good repair, while the church perhaps has scarce any other roof than the ivy that grows over it. The noise of owls, bats, and magpies makes the principal part of the church-music in many of these ancient edifices; and the walls, like a large map, seem to be portioned out into capes, seas, and promontories, by the various colours by which the damps have stained them. Sometimes, the foundation being too weak to support the steeple any longer, it has been found expedient to pull down that part of the building, and to hang the bells under a wooden shed on the ground beside it. This is the case in a parish in Norfolk, through which I lately passed, and where the clerk and the sexton, like the two figures at St. Dunstan's, serve the bells in capacity of clappers, by striking them alternately with a hammer.

In other churches I have observed, that nothing unseemly or ruinous is to be found, except in the clergyman and the appendages of his person. The 'squire of the parish, or his ancestors perhaps, to testify their devotion, and leave a lasting monument of their magnificence, have adorned the altar-piece with the richest crimson velvet, embroidered with vine-leaves and ears of wheat; and have dressed up the pulpit with the same splendour and expense; while the gentleman, who fills it, is exalted, in the midst of all this finery, with a surplice as dirty as a farmer's

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frock, and a periwig that seems to have transferred its faculty of curling to the band, which appears in full buckle beneath it.

But if I was concerned to see several distressed pastors, as well as many of our country churches in a tottering condition, I was more offended with the indecency of worship in others. I could wish that the clergy would inform their congregations, that there is no occasion to scream themselves hoarse in making the responses; that the town-crier is not the only person qualified to pray with due devotion; and that he who bawls the loudest may, nevertheless, be the wickedest fellow in the parish. The old women too in the aile might be told, that their time would be better employed in attending to the sermon, than in fumbling over their tattered testaments till they have found the text; by which time the discourse is drawing near to a conclusion: while a word or two of instruction might not be thrown away upon the younger part of the congregation, to teach them that making posies in summer time, and cracking nuts in autumn, is no part of the religious ceremony.

The good old practice of psalm-singing is, indeed, wonderfully improved in many country churches since the days of Sternhold and Hopkins; and there is scarce a parish-clerk, who has so little taste as not to pick his staves out of the New Version. This has occasioned great complaints in some places, where the clerk has been forced to bawl by himself, because the rest of the congregation cannot find the psalm at the end of their prayer-books; while others are highly disgusted at the innovation, and stick as obstinately to

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the Old Version as to the old style. The tunes themselves have also been new set to jiggish measures; and the sober drawl, which used to accompany the two first staves of the hundredth psalm, with the *gloria patri*, is now split into as many quavers as an Italian air. For this purpose there is in every county an itinerant band of vocal musicians, who make it their business to go round to all the churches in their turns, and, after a prelude with the pitch-pipe, astonish the audience with hymns set to the new Winchester measure, and anthems of their own composing. As these new-fashioned psalmodists are necessarily made up of young men and maids, we may naturally suppose that there is a perfect concord and symphony between them: and, indeed, I have known it happen, that these sweet singers have more than once been brought into disgrace, by too close an unison between the thorough-bass and the treble.

It is a difficult matter to decide which is looked upon as the greatest man in a country church, the parson or his clerk. The latter is most certainly held in higher veneration, where the former happens to be only a poor curate, who rides post every sabbath from village to village, and mounts and dismounts at the church-door. The clerk's office is not only to tag the prayers with an Amen, or usher in the sermon with a stave; but he is also the universal father to give away the brides, and the standing god-father to all the new-born bantlings. But in many places there is a still greater man belonging to the church, than either the parson or the clerk himself. The person I mean is the 'squire; who, like the king, may be styled head of the

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church in his own parish. If the benefice be in his own gift, the vicar is his creature, and of consequence entirely at his devotion: or, if the care of the church be left to a curate, the Sunday fees of roast beef and plum pudding, and a liberty to shoot in the manor, will bring him as much under the 'squire's command as his dogs and horses. For this reason the bell is often kept tolling, and the people waiting in the church-yard, an hour longer than the usual time; nor must the service begin till the 'squire has strutted up the aile, and seated himself in the great pew in the chancel. The length of the sermon is also measured by the will of the 'squire, as formerly by the hour-glass: and I know one parish where the preacher has always the complaisance to conclude his discourse, however abruptly, the minute that the 'squire gives the signal, by rising up after his nap.

In a village church, the 'squire's lady, or the vicar's wife are perhaps the only females, that are stared at for their finery: but in the larger cities and towns, where the newest fashions are brought down weekly by the stage-coach or waggon, all the wives and daughters of the most topping tradesmen vie with each other every Sunday in the elegance of their apparel. I could even trace their gradations in their dress, according to the opulence, the extent, and the distance of the place from London. I was at church in a populous city in the North, where the mace-bearer cleared the way for Mrs. Mayoress, who came sideling after him in an enormous fan-hoop, of a pattern which had never been seen before in those parts. At another church, in a corporation town, I saw several negligees, with fur-

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belowed aprons, which had long disputed the prize of superiority: but these were most woefully eclipsed by a burgess's daughter, just come from London, who appeared in a trolloppe or slammerkin, with treble ruffles to the cuffs, pinked and gymped, and the sides of the petticoat drawn up in festoons. In some lesser borough towns, the contest, I found, lay between three or four black and green bibs and aprons: at one, a grocer's wife attracted our eyes, by a new-fashioned cap, called a Joan; and, at another, they were wholly taken up by a mercer's daughter in a nun's hood.

I need not say any thing of the behaviour of the congregations in these more polite places of religious resort; as the same genteel ceremonies are practised there, as at the most fashionable churches in town. The ladies, immediately on their entrance, breathe a pious ejaculation through their fan-sticks, and the beaux very gravely address themselves to the haberdasher's bills, glewed upon the linings of their hats. This pious duty is no sooner performed, than the exexercise of bowing and courtesying succeeds: the locking and unlocking of the pews drowns the reader's voice at the beginning of the service; and the rustling of silks, added to the whispering and tittering of so much good company, renders him totally unintelligible to the very end of it.

I am, dear Cousin, yours, &c.

T.

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No. 138. ON CONVERSATION.

Servatâ semper lege et ratione loquendi. Juv.

Your talk to decency and reason suit,
Nor prate like fools, or gabble like a brute.

In the comedy of the Frenchman in London, which we are told was acted at Paris with universal applause for several nights together, there is a character of a rough Englishman, who is represented as quite unskilled in the graces of conversation; and his dialogue consists almost entirely of a repetition of the common salutation of *how do you do, how do you do?* Our nation has, indeed, been generally supposed to be of a sullen and uncommunicative disposition; while, on the other hand, the loquacious French have been allowed to possess the art of conversing beyond all other people. The Englishman requires to be wound up frequently, and stops very soon; but the Frenchman runs on in a continued alarum. Yet it must be acknowledged, that, as the English consist of very different humours, their manner of discourse admits of great variety: but the whole French nation converse alike; and there is no difference in their address between a marquis and a valet de chambre. We may frequently see a couple of French barbers accosting each other in the street, and paying their compliments with the same volubility of speech, the same grimace and action, as two courtiers on the Thuilleries.

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I shall not attempt to lay down any particular rules for conversation, but rather point out such faults in discourse and behaviour, as render the company of half mankind rather tedious than amusing. It is in vain, indeed, to look for conversation, where we might expect to find it in the greatest perfection, among persons of fashion: there it is almost annihilated by universal card-playing; insomuch that I have heard it given as a reason, why it is impossible for our present writers to succeed in the dialogue of genteel comedy, that our people of quality scarce ever meet but to game. All their discourse turns upon the odd trick and the four honours: and it is no less a maxim with the votaries of whist than with those of Bacchus, that talking spoils company.

Every one endeavours to make himself as agreeable to society as he can; but it often happens that those, who most aim at shining in conversation, overshoot their mark. Though a man succeeds, he should not (as is frequently the case) engross the whole talk to himself; for that destroys the very essence of conversation, which is talking together. We should try to keep up conversation like a ball bandied to and fro from one to the other, rather than seize it all to ourselves, and drive it before us like a foot-ball. We should likewise be cautious to adapt the matter of our discourse to our company; and not talk Greek before ladies, or of the last new furbelow to a meeting of country justices.

But nothing throws a more ridiculous air over our whole conversation, than certain peculiarities easily acquired, but very difficultly conquered and discarded.

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In order to display these absurdities in a truer light, it is my present purpose to enumerate such of them, as are most commonly to be met with; and first to take notice of those buffoons in society, the attitudinarians and face-makers. These accompany every word with a peculiar grimace or gesture: they assent with a shrug, and contradict with a twisting of the neck; are angry with a wry mouth, and pleased in a caper or a minuet step. They may be considered as speaking Harlequins; and their rules of eloquence are taken from the posture-master. These should be condemned to converse only in dumb show with their own person in the looking-glass; as well as the smirkers and smilers, who so prettily set off their faces, together with their words, by a *je-ne-sçai-quoi* between a grin and a dimple. With these we may likewise rank the affected tribe of mimics, who are constantly taking off the peculiar tone of voice or gesture of their acquaintance: though they are such wretched imitators, that (like bad painters) they are frequently forced to write the name under the picture before they can discover any likeness.

Next to these, whose elocution is absorbed in action, and who converse chiefly with their arms and legs, we may consider the professed speakers. And first, the emphatical; who squeeze, and press, and ram down every syllable with excessive vehemence and energy. These orators are remarkable for their distinct elocution and force of expression: they dwell on the important particles *of* and *the*, and the significant conjunctive *and;* which they seem to hawk up, with much difficulty, out of their own throats, and to cram

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them, with no less pain, into the ears of their auditors. These should be suffered only to syringe (as it were) the ears of a deaf man, through a hearing trumpet: though I must confess, that I am equally offended with the whisperers or low speakers, who seem to fancy all their acquaintance deaf, and come up so close to you, that they may be said to measure noses with you, and frequently overcome you with the exhalations of a powerful breath. I would have these oracular gentry obliged to talk at a distance through a speaking-trumpet, or apply their lips to the walls of a whispering gallery. The wits, who will not condescend to utter any thing but a *bon mot*, and the whistlers or tune-hummers, who never articulate at all, may be joined very agreeably together in concert: and to these tinkling cymbals I would also add the sounding brass; the bawler who enquires after your health with the bellowing of a town-crier.

The tatlers, whose pliable pipes are admirably adapted to the "soft parts of conversation," and sweetly "prattling out of fashion," make very pretty music from a beautiful face and a female tongue: but from a rough manly voice and coarse feature, mere nonsense is as harsh and dissonant as a jig from an hurdy-gurdy. The swearers I have spoken of in a former paper; but the half-swearers, who split, and mince, and fritter their oaths into *gad's bud*, *ad's fish* and *demmee*; the Gothic humbuggers, and those who "nickname God's creatures," and call a man a cabbage, a crab, a queer cub, an odd fish, and an unaccountable *muskin*, should never come into company without an interpreter. But I will not tire my reader's patience by

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pointing out all the pests of conversation; nor dwell particularly on the sensibles, who pronounce dogmatically on the most trivial points, and speak in sentences; the wonderers, who are always *wondering* what o'clock it is, or *wondering* whether it will rain or no, or *wondering* when the moon changes; the phraseologists, who explain a thing by *all that*, or enter into particulars with *this and that and t'other;* and, lastly, the silent men, who seem afraid of opening their mouths, lest they should catch cold, and literally observe the precept of the gospel, by letting their conversation be only *yea yea*, and *nay nay*.

The rational intercourse kept up by conversation, is one of our principal distinctions from brutes. We should therefore endeavour to turn this peculiar talent to our advantage, and consider the organs of speech as the instruments of understanding: we should be very careful not to use them as the weapons of vice, or tools of folly, and do our utmost to unlearn any trivial or ridiculous habits, which tend to lessen the value of such an inestimable prerogative. It is, indeed, imagined by some philosophers, that even birds and beasts (though without the power of articulation) perfectly understand one another by the sounds they utter; and that dogs, cats, &c. have each a particular language to themselves, like different nations. Thus it may be supposed, that the nightingales of Italy have as fine an ear for their own native wood-notes, as any signor or signora for an Italian air; that the boars of Westphalia gruntle as expressively through the nose, as the inhabitants in High-German; and that the frogs in the dykes of Holland croak as intelligibly, as the

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natives jabber their Low-Dutch. However this may be, we may consider those, whose tongues hardly seem to be under the influence of reason, and do not keep up the proper conversation of human creatures, as imitating the language of different animals. Thus, for instance, the affinity between chatterers and monkeys, and praters and parrots, is too obvious not to occur at once: grunters and growlers may be justly compared to hogs: snarlers are curs; and the spitfire passionate are a sort of wild cats, that will not bear stroking, but will purr when they are pleased. Complainers are screech-owls; and story-tellers, always repeating the same dull note, are cuckoos. Poets, that prick up their ears at their own hideous braying, are no better than asses: critics in general are venomous serpents, that delight in hissing; and some of them, who have got by heart a few technical terms without knowing their meaning, are no other than magpies. I myself, who have crowed to the whole town for near three years past, may perhaps put my readers in mind of a dung-hill cock: but as I must acquaint them, that they will hear the last of me on this day fortnight, I hope they will then consider me as a swan, who is supposed to sing sweetly at his dying moments.

W.

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LETTER

FROM AN OWL TO A BIRD OF PARADISE.

SIR,

I HAVE lately been under some uneasiness at your silence, and began to fear that our friends in Paradise were not so well as I could wish; but I was told yesterday that the pigeon you employed as a carrier, after having been long pursued by a hawk, found it necessary to drop your letter, in order to facilitate her escape. I send you this by the claws of a distant relation of mine, an eagle, who lives on the top of a neighbouring mountain. The nights being short at this time of the year, my epistle will probably be so too; and it strains my eyes not a little to write, when it is not as dark as pitch. I am likewise much distressed for ink: the blackberry juice which I had bottled up having been all exhausted, I am forced to dip my beak in the blood of a mouse, which I have just caught; and it is so very savoury, that I think in my heart I swallow more than I expend in writing. A monkey who lately arrived in these parts, is teaching me and my eldest daughter to dance. The motion was a little uneasy to us at first, as he taught us to stretch our wings wide, and to turn out our toes; but it is easier now. I, in particular, am a tolerable proficient in a hornpipe, and can foot it very nimbly with a switch tucked under my left wing, considering my years and infirmities. As you are constantly gazing at the sun, it is no wonder that you complain of a

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weakness in your eyes; how should it be otherwise, when mine are none of the strongest, though I always draw the curtains over them as soon as he rises, in order to shut out as much of his light as possible? We have had a miserable dry season, and my ivy-bush is sadly out of repair. I shall be obliged to you if you will favour me with a shower or two, which you can easily do, by driving a few clouds together over the wood, and beating them about with your wings till they fall to pieces. I send you some of the largest berries the bush has produced, for your children to play withal. A neighbouring physician, who is a goat of great experience, says they will cure the worms; so if they should chance to swallow them, you need not be frightened. I have lately had a violent fit of the pip, which festered my rump to a prodigious degree. I have shed almost every feather in my tail, and must not hope for a new pair of breeches till next spring; so shall think myself happy if I escape the chin-cough, which is generally very rife in moulting season.

I am, dear Sir, &c. &c.

MADGE.

P. S.—I hear my character as first minister is a good deal censured; but "Let them censure; what care I?"

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THE FRAGMENT OF AN INTENDED COMMENTARY ON PARADISE LOST.

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COMMENTARY.

To Mr. Addison's remark on this subject it may not be improper to add, that though our syllables are not strictly reducible to the rules either of Greek or Latin prosody, they are nevertheless all long or short in the judgement of an accurate ear, and that without close attention to syllabic quantity in the construction of our verse, we can give it neither melody nor dignity. Milton, as Mr. Addison observes and proves, deals much in the Iambic and in the Trochee, and occasionally in several other kinds that he specifies; but perhaps the grand secret, to which his verse is principally indebted for its stately movement, is his more frequent use of the Spondee than of any other. The more long syllables there are in a verse, the more the line of it is protracted, and consequently the pace, with which it moves, is the more majestic.

BOOK I.

LINE 1. *Of Man's first disobedience.*

MAN in Paradise received two injunctions from his Maker, and two only. To keep holy the seventh day, and to abstain from a particular fruit, which if he ate,

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he would incur Death as the inevitable consequence. These were the sole tests of his allegiance; for created as he was, holy, and in the express image of God, he could have no need of a law written in Tables for his direction.

LINE 5. *And regain the blissful seat.*

The *seat* may be poetically said to be regained if the *state* be so, and that the state of Man shall hereafter be Paradisiacal seems sufficiently clear from those Scriptures, which speak of the restitution of all things. Neither is it improbable, that the seat or place itself of Paradise may be eminently distinguished in the economy of that Kingdom of universal righteousness, which according to an opinion always prevalent among Christians, and much countenanced by the Word of God, shall succeed the present dispensation.

LINE 6. *Secret top.*

Secret probably in respect of the secrecy of the interview between God and Moses, during which no creature was permitted, on pain of instant death, even to touch the mountain.

LINE 7. *Of Oreb or of Sinai.*

These are different names, either for the same mountain, or for different parts of it.

LINE 8. *That shepherd.*

Moses is called a shepherd either literally, because he *kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law*, Exod. iii. 1, or figuratively, as in Psalm lxxvii. 20, where it

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is said that God led his chosen through the wilderness like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

LINE 26. *And justify the ways of God to men.*

Justify them by evincing, that when Man by transgression incurred the forfeiture of his blessings, and the displeasure of God, himself only was to blame. God created him for happiness, made him completely happy, furnished him with sufficient means of security, and gave him explicit notice of his only danger. What could he more, unless he had compelled his obedience, which would have been at once to reduce him from the glorious condition of a free agent to that of an animal.

There is a solemnity of sentiment, as well as majesty of numbers, in the exordium of this noble Poem, which in the works of the ancients has no example.

The sublimest of all subjects was reserved for Milton, and bringing to the contemplation of that subject not only a genius equal to the best of theirs, but a heart also deeply impregnated with the divine truths, which lay before him, it is no wonder that he has produced a composition, on the whole, superior to any that we have received from former ages. But he, who addresses himself to the perusal of this work with a mind entirely unaccustomed to serious and spiritual contemplation, unacquainted with the Word of God, or prejudiced against it, is ill qualified to appreciate the value of a poem built upon it, or to taste its beauties. Milton is the Poet of Christians: an Infidel may have an ear for the harmony of his numbers, may be aware of the dignity of his expression, and in some

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degree of the sublimity of his conceptions, but the unaffected, and masculine piety, which was his true inspirer, and is the very soul of his poem, he will either not perceive, or it will offend him.

We cannot read this exordium without perceiving that the author possesses more fire than he shows. There is suppressed force in it, the effect of judgement. His judgement controuls his genius, and his genius reminds us (to use his own beautiful similitude) of

> "A proud steed rein'd,
> Champing his iron curb;"

he addresses himself to the performance of great things, but makes no great exertion in doing it; a sure symptom of uncommon vigour.

LINE 27. *Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view.*

This enquiry is not only poetically beautiful like Homer's Iliad, ii. 485, in which he addresses the Muses with a similar plea,

> Υμεις γαρ θεαι εστε, παρεστε τε, ιστε τε παντα;

or like that of Virgil, who pleads with them in the same manner, Æn. vii. 645,

> Et meministis, enim, Divæ, et memorare potestis:

but it has the additional recommendation of the most consummate propriety, and is in fact a prayer for information to the only Inspirer able to grant it. Of the manner of Man's creation, of his happy condition

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while innocent, and of the occasion and circumstances of his fall, we could have known nothing but from the intelligence communicated by the Holy Spirit.

LINE 39. *To set himself in glory above his peers.*

Dr. Pearce needed not perhaps to have gone so far as he did in his note on this line for a key to the true meaning of it. A single word in the next verse but one seems sufficiently to explain it—the word *ambitious*. It imports plainly an opposition not of mere enmity, but of enmity that aspired to superiority over the person opposed. Satan's aim, therefore, was, in Milton's view of it, to supplant the Most High, and to usurp the supremacy of Heaven; and by *peers* are intended, not only those who aided him in his purpose, but all the Angels, as well the faithful as the rebellious.

This line affording the first instance that occurs in the poem of a *y* cut from the end of a word that precedes a vowel, it affords also the fittest opportunity to observe, that though elisions of this kind, and many others frequent in Milton's practice, have fallen into disuse, their discontinuance is no advantage. In the ear of a person accustomed to meet them in the Greek and Latin Classics, where they abound, they have often an agreeable and sometimes a very fine effect. But it is admitted, that discretion and a good taste are requisite to the proper use of them, and that too frequently employed, or unskilfully, they may prove indeed deformities.

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LINE 50. *Nine times the space that measures day and night.*

It is observable, that between all the members of which this long period consists, the same pause, or nearly the same, obtains, till it terminates at line seventy-four. Thus the voice, and the ear, are held in a sort of terrible suspense, while the poet proceeds enumerating, as he would never cease, the horrors of the scene, deepening them still more and more as he goes, till at last he closes all with that circumstance of most emphatic misery, the immeasurable distance to which these apostate spirits had fallen from God, and the light of Heaven. There is a doleful music in the whole passage, that fitly accompanies such a subject.

LINE 75. *Oh how unlike the place, from whence they fell.*

Of all the articles, of which the dreadful scenery of Milton's Hell consists, Scripture furnished him only with a Lake of Fire and Brimstone. Yet, thus slenderly assisted, what a world of woe has he constructed by the force of an imagination, proved, in this single instance, the most creative that ever poet owned!

LINE 114. . . . . *that were low indeed. That were an ignominy, &c.*

To invent speeches for these Infernals so well adapted to their character, speeches burning with rage against God, and with disdain and contempt of his

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power, and to avoid in them all the extreme danger of revolting and shocking the reader past all sufferance, was indeed, as Horace says—*Ire per extentum funem*, and evidences the most exquisite address in the author.

LINE 143. *But what if He our conqu'ror.*

There is a fine discrimination observable in the respective speeches of Satan and Beelzebub. In those of the former we find that unbroken hardiness of spirit, which suits well the character of the Arch-fiend and seducer of all the others; while Beelzebub so speaks as to seem somewhat less obdurate, less a devil than his leader; he is dejected, he desponds, he forecasts the worst, and is in a degree impressed with a suitable sense of his condition.

LINE 177. *To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.*

In this line we seem to hear a thunder suited both to the scene and the occasion, incomparably more aweful than any ever heard on earth, and the *thunder wing'd with light'ning* is highly poetical. It may be observed here, that the thunder of Milton is not hurled from the hand like Homer's, but discharged like an arrow. Thus in book vi. line 712, the Father, ordering forth the Son for the destruction of the rebel Angel, says,

> Bring forth all my war,
> *My bow, and thunder—*

as if, jealous for the honour of the true God, the poet disdained to arm him like the God of the heathen.—

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So in Psalm vii. 12, it is said—"If he turn not he will whet his sword; he hath *bent his bow* and made it ready; he ordaineth his *arrows* against the persecutors."

The substance of this ingenious vindication of Milton against the charge of Bentley is taken from a note of Richardson, though by some inadvertence Dr. Newton, who borrows it, has omitted to make the acknowledgment.

LINE 193. *With head uplift.*

Milton frequently abridges the participle perfect of its last syllable, by this, and a multitude of such artifices, giving his language an air of novelty.

LINE 202. *Created hugest, that swim the ocean stream.*

The author, speaking of a vast creature, speaks in numbers suited to the subject, and gives his line a singular and strange movement, by inserting the word *hugest* where it may have the clumsiest effect. He might easily have said in smoother verse

Created hugest of the ocean stream

but smoothness was not the thing to be consulted when the Leviathan was in question. In like manner, speaking of the larger fishes, book vii. 410, he says,

part, huge of bulk,
Wallowing unwieldy! enormous in their gait,
Tempest the ocean.

What man of true taste would exchange such cumbersome verse, on such an occasion, for the most musical that ever was written?

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LINE 203. *Him haply slumbering on the Norway foam.*

This simile is most happily introduced, and finely chosen by the poet for the relief of his reader, who feels his imagination refreshed by such a sudden removal from scenes of fire to the shores of the ocean.

LINE 207. *Under the lee.*

Milton, as Dr. Newton here insinuates, has indeed been charged with an affectation of technical *terms;* but his use of the word *lee* in this place seems no proof it. What other word could he have found in our language, by which to express the situation intended? and was not such a word (of maritime use indeed, but almost universally understood in our country) to be preferred to a tedious circumlocution?

LINE 215. *Heap on himself damnation.*

Here Milton seems to have had in view Romans ii. 5. "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgement of God."

LINE 241. *Not by the suff'rance of supernal power.*

To which cause alone the poet himself ascribes it a little before. See lines 211, 212.

LINE 257. *All but less than he.*

The construction perhaps is not very obvious, but

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seems to be this. "What matter where I am, so I be still the same, and what I should be in every respect, this one particular excepted, that I am less than he, whom thunder hath made greater?"

LINE 298.—*Smote on him sore besides.*

The poet in other passages expresses the effect of violent heat by the verb *smite*. Thus in book iv. 244, he says,

> Both where the morning sun first warmly *smote*
> The open field.

And again it occurs in his 5th Italian Sonnet.

> *Per certo, i bei vostri' occhi, Donna mia,*
> *Esser non puo che non sian lo mio sole,*
> *Si mi* percuoton *forte.*

LINE 300.—*Of that inflamed sea.*

Milton sometimes cuts off the last syllable of the participle in *ed*, and sometimes, as here, allows its complete pronunciation. It were to be wished, that the practice of incorporating it with the preceding syllable by the absorption of the intermediate *e*—as in *thrash'd*, *advanc'd*, *wreck'd*, and other words of the like kind, had not so universally obtained, as it has. For the consequence is often a clutter of consonants with only a single vowel to assist their utterance, which has a barbarous effect, both in the sound, and in the appearance.

LINE 315.

Of all the harangues, that either history, or poetry, has invented for commanders rallying their routed

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armies, none was ever better conceived than this. Satan seems himself astonished in the beginning of it, but it is at their astonishment, which, though he sees it, he can hardly believe. Next affecting ignorance of the real cause of their inactivity, he imputes it to sloth and indolence, as if to stimulate them by derision. In the third place, to provoke and rouse them still more, he pretends to suppose it possible, that they may be at that moment employed in worshipping and doing homage to the conqueror. Lastly he uses solid argument, reminding them of the danger, to which they expose themselves by such supineness, and finishes his exhortation with a line detached from the rest, and therefore so emphatical that while he utters it, we seem to hear the vaults of Hell re-echo.

LINE 335. *Nor did they not perceive.*

A Græcism, and taken from the *ουδ' απιθησε*—the *neque non paruit* of Homer.

LINE 376. *Who first, who last?*

So Homer, Iliad, v. 703.

Ἐνθα τίνα πρῶτον, τινα δ' ὑστατον;

LINE 379. *Came singly where he stood on the bare strand.*

Singly, in the true construction of this line, is to be connected with *stood*. They came where he stood singly. That is, as we are told in lines 299, 300.

On the beach
Of that inflamed sea.

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LINE 384.—*Their altars by His altar.*

The expression alludes to Ezekiel xliii. 8. "In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts——they have even defiled my holy name," &c.

LINE 418. *Till good Josiah drove them thence to Hell.*

This is an allusion to 2 Chron. xxxiv. 4. "And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his (Josiah's) presence, and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down, and the groves and carved images, and the molten images he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them."

LINE 455. *Ezekiel saw.*

See Ezekiel viii. 16. "And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men with their backs towards the temple of the Lord, and their faces towards the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east."

LINE 499. *Ascends above the loftiest tow'rs.*

So Homer makes Eumæus, speaking of the riotous deeds of the suitors, say,

Τῶν ὑβρις τε σιδήρεον οὐρανον ικει.

Od. xv. 328.

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LINE 516. *Ruled the middle air.*

A portion which the poet seems to allot to Jupiter on the authority of Homer, Iliad xv. 192.

Ζευς δ' ελαχ' ουρανον ευρυν εν αιθέρι και νεφέλῃσι.

LINE 537. *Shone like a meteor.*

Mr. Gray had doubtless this line in his eye, when in the second stanza of his Ode entitled the Bard, he said,

Loose his beard and hoary hair
Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled air.

LINE 542. *A shout that tore, &c.*

Homer's is a noble shout of which he says in the last line of the Iliad xiii.

'Ηχη δ' αμφοτερων ικετ' αιθερα, και Διος αυγας.

But this as far surpasses it, as the fallen Angels were more terrible than the Greeks and the Trojans, and the vault of Hell more congenial to such an uproar, than the plain of Troy.

LINE 550. —— *such as rais'd*
To highth of noblest temper, &c.

Milton never has occasion to mention music, but he discovers plainly how much he delights in the subject. He always speaks of it experimentally and like a man whom his own feelings have made acquainted with its effects, and in this charming passage the lines themselves are as sweet as the melody they describe.

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LINE 585. —— *and what resounds*
In fable or romance.

Perhaps there are readers of Milton, not altogether destitute of taste, who feel themselves, when they meet with a passage in him like the present, disposed to be more merciful to it than some of his severer judges. Allusions to ancient story, whether false or true, and to customs and practices long since obsolete, affect a contemplative mind agreeably, and to such persons perhaps the very sound of names, like these, is not unpleasing.

LINE 589. *Their dread commander.*

Milton's divine subject afforded him opportunities of surpassing in sublime description all the poets his predecessors, and his talents were such as enabled him to use those opportunities to the best advantage. Homer's representation of Agamemnon in the second Iliad, where he says that in his eyes and countenance, he resembled Jove the thunderer, that he was like Mars in girth, and had the port of Neptune, is indeed magnificent; but when he finishes his picture by likening him to a bull, how far short does he fall of Milton, who when he compares his lost Archangel to the sun new risen in a misty morning, or eclipsed by the moon, not only does not degrade his subject, but fills the mind of his reader with astonishing conceptions of its grandeur.

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LINE 606. *The fellows of his crime, the followers rather——*

Not so properly the fellows, because he seduced them, as the followers, for the same reason.

LINE 616. *— whereat their doubled ranks they bend.*

Thus forming themselves into a hemicycle or half moon figure, that all might hear him.

LINE 640. *——but still his strength conceal'd.*

It was necessary, that Satan should excuse himself, as well as he could, to the myriads of his ruined followers, and he could not do it better (though even that was but a poor apology) than by pleading the impossibility, that he should be prepared effectually to withstand a power, with the very existence of which, through God's concealment of it, till the hour in which they fell he had been necessarily unacquainted. A vanquished chief, who pleads surprise, excuses himself by his fault.

LINE 650. *——whereof so rife.*

Rife is a Saxon word, and signifies *frequent* or common.

LINE 659. *——But these thoughts Full counsel must mature.*

Αλλ' μεν ηοι ταυτα μεταφρασομεσθα και αυτις.
Iliad i. 140.

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LINE 663. *He spake: and to confirm his words.*

This is another instance (see the note on line 589) in which appears the advantage, that Milton derives from the grandeur of his subject. What description could even he have given of a host of human warriors insulting their conqueror, at all comparable to this? First, their multitude is to be noticed. They are not thousands but millions; and they are millions not of puny mortals, but of mighty cherubim. Their swords flame not metaphorically, but they are swords of fire; they flash not by reflection of the sun-beams like the swords of Homer, but their own light, and that light plays not idly on the broad day, but far round illumines Hell. And lastly, they defy not a created being like themselves, but the Almighty.

It was doubtless a happiness to have fallen on a subject that furnished such scenery, and such characters to act in it, but a happiness it would not have been to a genius inferior to Milton's; such a one, on the contrary, would have been depressed by it, and in what Milton reaches with a graceful ease, would have fallen short, after much and fruitless labour.

LINE 670. —— *whose grisly top.*

Grisly seems to signify *rough* or *hideous*, but perhaps answers more exactly in its import to the Latin word, *hispidus*.

LINE 689. *Open'd into the hill a spacious wound.*

This is a beautiful expression, and may serve to show how an act or image, vulgar and ordinary in itself, may be dignified by mere force of diction.

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LINE 713. —— *where pilasters round, &c.*

Milton has been censured by Addison, as well as by Dr. Newton, here, for his use of technical expressions, and the point, enforced as it has been by such great authority, seems to be given up. But perhaps it may even now be permitted to an annotator to ask two simple questions on the present occasion. Was it lawful to the poet to give a minute description of this wonderful structure? Surely it was. Ovid has minutely described the palace of the Sun, and Homer that of Alcinous. If then, there was no fault in describing it minutely, it should seem that there could be none in particularizing the several members of it by such terms, as could alone express them. Milton, in fact, had no other means of making his account intelligible.

LINE 772-3. —— *The ascending pile*
Stood fixt her stately highth.

The expression is elliptical and requires two words to supply the deficiency, when it would stand thus——

The ascending pile
Stood fixt *through all* her stately highth.

LINE 777. *Behold a wonder!*

This contrivance has been censured by some, and particularly by Voltaire, who, having stated his objections to it, calls it an idle tale, that may match the most extravagant. But extravagant it cannot seem, if we allow ourselves to recollect who are in question, and what the Scripture says concerning them. All that we know of invisible agents, whether good or evil,

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we learn from Scripture, which tells us that a single demoniac was possessed by a legion. Scripture, therefore ascribes to the devils this power of self contraction, and if Scripture gives it them, it would be difficult to assign a good reason, why Milton should not have imagined them to employ it on this occasion.

It may be observed also that this poetical artifice, instead of depriving us of the idea of their natural bulk and stature, much enlarges it, representing them as not to be contained at their full size within walls of any dimensions, and at the same time it gives us a most magnificent impression of their numbers.

BOOK II.

LINE 5. —— *by merit raised.*

BY merit diabolical—by the merit of daring most against God; for desert is relative, and wickedness is merit with the wicked.

LINE 10. —— *by success untaught.*

Success is here synonymous with *event*, and the expression imports the same as *untaught by experience.*

LINE 30. —— *where there is then no good.*

There is admirable subtlety displayed in this speech of Satan, in which he palliates his own miserable condition, and that of his followers, by representing it as friendly, at least, to that unanimity which is essential to the success of great enterprizes, and the surest pledge

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of their accomplishment. The truth was, that the absence of all good was the very circumstance that evinced them perfectly and completely ruined, but the poet makes Satan deduce from it a conclusion directly contrary with so much art and plausibility, that the fallacy is almost hidden from the reader.

LINE 33. —— *none whose portion.*

Here is certainly, as Dr. Newton has observed, a difficulty in the Syntax, but the punctuation recommended in the preceding note entirely divests the passage of Milton's style and manner, and *he'll* for *he will* is intolerably coarse and ordinary. It seems much more probable, therefore, that irregular as the connexion is, Milton actually dictated the lines as we find them. When the meaning is obvious, he not seldom seems to disdain grammatical niceties. See Dr. Pearce's note on line 47.

LINE 133. *Dropt manna.*

Milton in these two words gives us all the sweetness of Homer's celebrated line, when commending Nestor's eloquence, he says,

Τω και απο γλωσσης μελιτος γλυκιων ρεεν αυδη.

LINE 122. —— *to cast*
Ominous conjecture.

New combinations in language, or in other words, the invention of new phrases, is an argument of great ability in a writer, and few have furnished more instances of this than Milton.

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LINE 155. *Will he, so wise.*

Belial, in this passage, Devil as he is, seems to ascribe to God his due praise for wisdom, while he even derides a supposition that imputes weakness to him. But it is to be observed, that he holds this language merely to serve a purpose; to answer Moloch, and to recommend his own timid counsel to their acceptance.

He is afterwards still more explicit, and even pious and orthodox on the subjects of God's universal knowledge and omnipotence. See from line 188 to line 192. But always with the same intention; to strengthen his argument for peace and non-resistance.

LINE 186. *Ages of hopeless end?*

In these words we have an instance of the kind alluded to in the note on l. 33, in which the poet has not attended to strictness of grammatical construction. Syntax required that he should have said—*Ages hopeless of end*—concerning which there could be no hope that they should ever terminate. But trusting to the candour and sagacity of his reader, he has deviated a little from rule, for the sake of more grace and harmony than were compatible with the observance of it.

LINE 212. —— *satisfied*
With what is punish'd,

The sense is evidently—*satisfied with the punishment which he has already inflicted*—and the expression is here also irregular in its construction. But the brevity of it is clear and beautiful. Nor does Milton ever transgress grammatical propriety, but for the sake of an advantage more than equivalent. Let poets err

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on this condition only, and the precedent will do no mischief.

LINE 220. —— *this darkness light.*

There is no sort of occasion to suppose with Dr. Bentley that *light* is here an *adjective* and means *easy;* or with Mr. Thyer, that it is an *adjective,* and means *luminous.* Nothing is necessary to justify it as a *substantive,* but to recollect, what all have experienced, that a feeble light which at first seems darkness, by degrees becomes sufficient for the purposes of vision, the eye accommodating itself to the inconvenience. It should be remembered too that the darkness of Milton's Hell is not absolute, but a kind of *sublustris nox,* or as he calls it himself, *darkness visible.*

The rhyme, it must be acknowledged is unfortunate, but rhyme is apt to come uncalled, and to writers of blank verse is often extremely troublesome.

LINE 247. —— *how wearisome*
Eternity so spent!

Admit that forced hallelujahs can possibly have place in Heaven, and Mammon reasons well: but the fact is inadmissible, and the very supposition of it impious to a degree well suited to the character of such a speaker. Wearisome as such service would be to the worshipper, it would be infinitely more disgusting to God, and could not fail to be silenced in a moment.

LINE 255. —— *preferring*
Hard liberty.

A noble sentiment in a good cause, but in Mammon's use of it, truly devilish!

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LINE 279. *To peaceful counsels.*

Satan indeed, as Dr. Newton remarks, proposes to them war, and the fittest manner of concluding it, as the subjects then to be debated; but when Belial and Mammon recommend peace rather than war, in whatsoever way conducted, they cannot properly be said to wander from the point in question, they only differ from Satan in their opinion concerning the measure next to be adopted. Suppose a question agitated in a council in what manner an enemy's fortress might be best attacked; would a member of that council be chargeable with deviating, who should advise no attack at all? So far from it that, such being his sentiments, he could not possibly find a juster occasion to deliver them.

LINE 285. —— *as when hollow rocks, &c.*

It is not improbable, as Dr. Newton here observes, that Milton composed this beautiful simile with an eye to that which he quotes from Claudian, but in the lines of our poet there is a solemn and aweful grandeur, that resembles much more the manner of Homer, with the best of whose sea-piece similes this may well endure a comparison.

LINE 300. —— *with grave*
Aspect he rose.

We have here a description of an orator rising to address a great assembly, such as no writer of antiquity ever equalled. Homer and Ovid both exerted themselves on a similar subject, and evidently bestowed

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much labour on their respective pieces. But compare this picture of Beelzebub either with the Ajax of the latter,

Utque erat impatiens iræ, &c.

or with the Ulysses of the former,

Αλλ' οτε δη πολυμητις αναιξειεν Οδυσσευς

and you will not hesitate a moment to give the praise of great superiority to the English poet.

LINE 370. ——*and with repenting hand*
Abolish his own works.

It seems highly probable, that Satan was prompted to the seduction of our first parents by some such expectation, which must have been gratified, but for the interposition of the Son of God, of whose intended incarnation he was undoubtedly ignorant. No slighter consequence than the destruction of the earth, by the hand that formed it, could otherwise have followed the revolt of man, since to have continued, and multiplied, a species called into existence only to be miserable for ever, would have been a mode of punishment more dishonourable to God than the sin itself for which it was inflicted.

LINE 385. —— *But their spite still serves*
His glory to augment.

This is a great and sacred truth. There would have been no opportunity for the display of mercy, the attribute, of all, which most endears the Creator to his creature, had not the fall supplied one.

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LINE 400. —— *delicious air.*

How beautiful is the epithet *delicious*, and how admirably expressive of that *thirst* after a purer atmosphere, which he must necessarily feel, who has long inhaled the air of a dungeon! but the speaker's estimation of its value is, if possible, still more forcibly expressed in the following metaphor, and when he calls it a *balm to heal the scar of those corrosive fires*, we almost feel the scorch, and the pleasure of the remedy.

LINE 406. —— *palpable obscure.*

Like the darkness of Egypt, which the Scripture tells us, was darkness that might be felt.

LINE 409. —— *the vast abrupt.*

The chaos described afterward, the immense chasm, or gulf interposed between earth and hell.

LINE 465.

Dr. Newton might have observed, that there is a peremptoriness in the manner of this conclusion, that gives it particular propriety and beauty. It reminds us of Homer's

μαλα κρατερως αγορευσε.

LINE 488. *As when from mountain tops . .*

The reader loses half the beauty of this charming simile, who does not give particular attention to the numbers. There is a majesty in them not often equalled and never surpassed even by this great poet himself;

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the movement is uncommonly slow; an effect produced by means already hinted at, the assemblage of a greater proportion of long syllables than usual. The pauses are also managed with great skill and judgement; while the clouds rise, and the heavens gather blackness, they fall in those parts of the verse where they retard the reader most, and thus become expressive of the solemnity of the subject; but in the latter part of the simile, where the sun breaks out, and the scene brightens, they are so disposed as to allow the verse an easier and less interrupted flow, more suited to the cheerfulness of the occasion.

LINE 496. *O shame to men!*

It has been observed by the critics, and by Aristotle, the chief of them all, that in an epic work the poet should be hidden as much as possible, and ought but seldom, in the way of reflection, or remark, to obtrude himself on the notice of the reader. The observation was, no doubt, at first suggested by the practice of Homer, who rarely shews himself, except when he invokes the Muse, or would rehearse the terrors of a battle, by seeming to shudder at his own description of it. Virgil is also very temperate in this particular, and if Milton be less reserved than either, it should be considered that there is more real worth and importance in a single reflection of his, than in all those of his heathen predecessors taken together: and that in a poem like that of Paradise Lost, where the subject could not fail continually to suggest the most interesting and valuable remarks, it was almost a duty not to suppress them. Milton, however, must in fact

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have suppressed a multitude, and instead of being blamed for excess, deserves to be admired for his moderation.

LINE 506. *The Stygian council thus dissolved.*

The verb *dissolve* in the common use of it is either active or passive, and we should say, either that the council *dissolved itself*, or that it was dissolved; but Milton here uses it as a deponent.

LINE 518. —— *the hollow' abyss.*

This is an instance of the fine effect of an elision used judiciously. His ear is not well formed for nice distinction of sounds, who would think the line improved by a monosyllable epithet, which would make it run more smoothly.

LINE 533. *As when to warn proud cities.*

A captious reader might object to this simile as exhibiting a comparison of the subject with a thing that never existed, for that in fact no such *aerial knights* were ever seen in the clouds, except by the dreaming vulgar. But let such readers confine themselves to prose. Verse is not their element. It is always lawful for a poet to avail himself of a prevalent and popular opinion, and to realize a creature of the fancy, merely for the sake of embellishment and illustration.

LINE 542. *As when Alcides.*

Dr. Newton approves of Mr. Thyer's objection to this simile, and with him condemns it, but perhaps for

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no sufficient reason. It is by no means necessary, that a simile should be more magnificent than the subject, it is enough that it gives us a clearer and more distinct perception of it, than we could have without it. Were it the indispensable duty of a simile to elevate, as well as to illustrate, what must be done with many of Homer's? When he compares the Greecian troops, pouring themselves forth from camp and fleet in the plain of Troy, to bees issuing from a hollow rock; or the body of Patroclus in dispute between the two armies, to an ox hide larded, and stretched by the curriers, we must condemn him utterly as guilty of degrading his subject, when he should exalt it. But the exaltation of his subject was no part of Homer's concern on these occasions, he intended nothing more than the clearest possible impression of it on the mind of his hearers.

It may be farther observed, that the frenzy of the fallen angels, caused by pain and furious passions, being the principal, if not the only point, in which Milton intended that the simile should bear upon the subject, he could not have chosen a happier, than this of Hercules mad with anguish.

LINE 547. *Retreated in a silent valley.*

The poet, in the sixth book, speaking of the hills which the angels hurled at their apostate enemies, says,

> For earth had this variety from heaven,
> Of pleasure situate in hill and dale.

How is it then that this variety obtains in hell also?

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Either the inconsistency escaped his notice, or he thought it not worth regarding.

LINE 552. *Their song was partial.*

Partial to themselves. Was silent as to the corrupt motive of their conduct, and dwelt only on the sad consequences of it.

LINE 561. *And found no end.*

A good lesson, and no doubt intended as such by the poet, to controversialists on these difficult and mysterious subjects, on which books without end have been written, that have served no purpose but to load the shelves and to perplex the reader. The dispute therefore is here very wisely turned over to those whose tempers could not be hurt by it, and to whom it was an affair of small consequence to lose their labour.

LINE 614. —— *Thus roving on.*

The word *thus* refers the reader to the four parties last mentioned, who set forth, each a different way, on the business of discovery. See line 570.

LINE 618. *Through many a dark and dreary vale.*

The poet seems to have contemplated the horrid scene, till, as in a dream or vision, he saw it. His description of Hell is not only a map, but a natural history of it, and the Hells of Homer and Virgil are even comfortable compared with this.

A reader of taste cannot fail to observe how the

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colouring deepens, and darkens, from the beginning to the finishing of this dreadful picture, and that there is a frightful solemnity in the numbers of the whole period wonderfully adapted to the subject.

LINE 648. —— *Before the gates there sat.*

To the remark and quotation made by Dr. Newton, it may be added by way of comfort to all who, like Bishop Atterbury, have a taste for the extraordinary beauties of this passage, that if allegories are to be banished (as Mr. Addison thinks they should be) from the Epic, this of Milton will not be proscribed alone, but Homer's famous allegory, in which he personifies prayer and injury, must go with it. See Iliad ix. line 498. Perhaps also the group of allegorical figures assembled by Virgil at the mouth of Tartarus, must accompany them; but this is left to the decision of those who can persuade themselves to part with an exquisite beauty, for the sake of a slight, indeed a fanciful objection. See Virgil, Æn. vi. line 273. See also Dr. Newton's note on line 965.

LINE 666. —— *The other shape.*

Mr. Thyer seems to have attended but slightly to the appearance of Death as drawn by Milton, when he supposed it a copy of that which he has produced from Spenser. The Death of the latter is a decided shadow; but there is something incomparably more poetical in the ambiguous nature of the Death described by the former. Milton's is in fact an original figure, a Death of his own invention, a kind of intermediate form between matter and spirit, partaking of

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both, and consisting of neither. The idea of its substance is lost in its tenuity, and yet, contemplated awhile as a shadow, it becomes a substance.

It is not impossible, that the author might represent Death as a being of such doubtful definition, with an eye to its different effects on the fate of the righteous and the wicked. To these it is a real evil, to those, only an imaginary one.

LINE 672. —— *what seem'd his head.*

The indistinctness of this phantom-form is admirably well preserved. First the poet calls it a shape, then doubts if it could properly so be called; then a substance; then a shadow; then doubts if it was either; and lastly, he will not venture to affirm, that what seemed his head was such in reality, but being covered with the similitude of a crown, he is rather inclined to think it such. The dimness of this vague and fleeting outline is infinitely more terrible than exact description, because it leaves the imagination at full liberty to see for itself, and to suppose the worst.

LINE 686. —— *and learn by proof,*
Hell-born, not to contend with Spirits of Heaven.

Somewhat resembling, in the turn and manner of it, what Achilles says to Asteropæus, Iliad xxi. line 184.

χαλεπον τοι ερισθενεος Κρονιωνος
Παισιν εριζεμεναι, Ποταμοιο περ εκγεγαωτι.

LINE 688. *To whom the goblin full of wrath replied.*

The poet contrives to be as much at a loss to deno-

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minate, as to describe his Death, and seems to exhaust both invention and language for suitable appellations. He calls him, the shape, the monster, the goblin, the grisly terror, the hellish pest, the phantasm; and afterwards, in the tenth book, the grim feature.

LINE 713. *No second stroke intend.*

The expression reminds us of Abishai's speech to David, 1 Samuel, xxvi. 8, when he entreats his permission to slay Saul.

Let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear, even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

LINE 747. *Hast thou forgot me then, and do*
I seem
Now in thine eye so foul?

This is a very just and instructive part of the allegory, as most can testify from their experience. Sin, pleasant in contemplation and enjoyment, is foul in retrospect, and man, while he suffers the remorse that attends it, stands amazed at himself that he could be seduced by it.

LINE 804. —— *who sets them on.*

This is also just. It is the dread of Death, which aggravates and gives emphasis to the accusations of conscience.

The whole allegory indeed is most judiciously conducted, in perfect harmony with Scripture, and human experience, and is, as Mr. Richardson has observed,

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a kind of paraphrase on these words of Saint James, i. 15.

" Then, when Lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin; and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death."

LINE 847. *His famine should be filled.*

Famine is here used for hunger, the cause for the effect.

LINE 876. —— *Then in the key-hole turns.*

The poet evidently had in view that passage of the twenty-first book of the Odyssey, in which Penelope opens the door of the chamber, where hung the fatal bow of Ulysses. See line 46.

> Αυτικ' αρ ηγ' ιμαντα θοως απελυσε κορωνη
> Εν δε κληιδ' ηκε, θυρεων δ'ανεκοπτεν οχηας
> Αντα τιτυσκομενη· ταδ' ανεβραχεν, ηυτε ταυρος
> Βοσκομενος λειμωνι· τοσ' εβραχε καλα θυρετρα
> Πληγεντα κληιδι, πετασθησαν δε οι ωκα.

Of which lines the Editor begs permission to give his own translation.

> She loosed the ring and brace, then introduced
> The key, and, aiming at them from without,
> Struck back the bolts. The portals, at that stroke,
> Sent forth a tone deep as the pastured bull's,
> And flew wide open.

But Milton's doors are opened in a style as much more sublime than Homer's, as the scene and the occasion are more tremendous.

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LINE 883. —— *She open'd, but to shut*
Excell'd her power.

A beautiful observation. Sin opens the infernal doors, but Mercy alone can shut them.

LINE 885. *That with extended wings, &c.*

Dimensions like these, vast as they are, are still within the bounds of credibility, when ascribed to such a subject; but the same, perhaps, cannot be said of Homer's helmet worn by Pallas, which he tells us was large enough to have covered the infantry of an hundred cities. Iliad v. line 744.

Εκατον πολεων πρυλεεσσ' αραρυιαν.

LINE 916. *His dark materials to create new worlds.*

This is a poetical account indeed, but rather a mechanical one of the creation, and such as, while it supposes the Deity to have needed means with which to work, falls far below the scriptural idea that he created all things out of nothing. The first verse in the Bible tells us with a most magnificent simplicity, that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and is perfectly silent as to any materials with which he formed them. To suppose indeed the existence of matter antecedent to the creation, is to suppose it eternal, and is, for that reason, as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural, and the very word *creation* implies existence given to something which never before existed.

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LINE 934. —— *and this hour*
Down had been falling.

This expression is like a fathoming-line put into our hands by the poet for the purpose of sounding an abyss without a bottom. Nor is this the only passage in which Milton sublimely and with great effect, by the help of a mere supposition, assists our apprehension of the subject. In the sixth book we find one similar to this, where, describing the battle of the angels, and the dreadful din that it occasioned, he says—

> All heaven
> Resounded, and had earth been then, all earth
> Had to her centre shook.

LINE 977. —— *Or if some other place.*

Meaning the earth, his purposed goal, and the great object of his enterprize.

LINE 988. —— *The Anarch old.*

Milton, as has been already observed, in the instance of Death, is extremely ingenious in the invention of names and titles suited to his ideal characters. An ordinary poet would have been contented to have called his Chaos a monarch, despairing of a better appellative; but how much more emphatical is the title here given him, which, while it sets before our eyes the figure of this king of all confusion, keeps awake our attention also to the uncontroulable wildness of his subjects!

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LINE 990. *I know thee, stranger, who thou art.*

The poet very judiciously represents Chaos as already informed of what otherwise he must have learned by narrative from Satan, whose journey must of course have been retarded, and whose reply, though necessary for the instruction of the inquirer, would have afforded no new lights to the reader.

LINE 1023. *But he, once past, &c.*

Dr. Newton might have recollected, that the slaughter of the suitors, the event on which the whole Odyssey turns, and which takes place in the twenty-second book, is anticipated in the twentieth, where Homer represents them as smitten with frenzy by Pallas, while their meat dripped blood as they ate it, and they laughed and wept involuntarily. Circumstances from which, as well as from several other terrible prognostics there mentioned, the prophet Theoclymenus foretells the slaughter of them all without one exception. The reader, thus apprized of it, cannot but foresee the catastrophe sooner by two books than it happens.

The death of Hector, who is slain in the twenty-second Iliad, is likewise anticipated, being foretold by Jupiter himself in the seventeenth.

And the death of Turnus, the event with which the Æneid closes, is so broadly hinted in the tenth book, that the reader must be slow of apprehension indeed, who does not thenceforth expect it. See line 503.

In all these instances the surprise is not only diminished but absolutely superseded; whereas in the pre-

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sent instance, the simple and bare mention of such a wonderful work as the bridge in question, rather excites curiosity than abates it, and does not in the least degree prevent our surprise and astonishment, when we read afterward in the tenth book the poet's circumstantial account of the manner in which it was constructed.

It is in reality a common thing with poets to touch slightly beforehand, a subject which they mean to dilate in the sequel.

LINE 1046. *Weighs his spread wings.*

The Editor begs leave to dissent from Mr. Thyer, in the preference that he gives to the line cited from Tasso. The word *adequate* is indeed a beautiful one, and the word *spread* does not compensate it; but if we connect with Milton's hemistich the words immediately ensuing, *at leisure to behold*, we find this act of *balancing the wings* prolonged to a degree that impresses it more forcibly on the reader's fancy, and which is therefore more poetical.

BOOK III.

Hail, holy light, &c.

CERTAINLY, as Dr. Newton intimates, there can be no need to apologize for lines like these, nor is there any room to question their propriety. If epic poetry can possibly disclaim so rich and noble an ornament, we may then fairly say that Milton has given us something better than an epic poem. But while we admire,

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and are charmed with the diction, and the melody of the numbers, we cannot but feel, that there is something in this passage still more captivating than even these; something, which not only pleases the ear and the fancy, but that wins the heart also, and endears the writer. It is that vein of unaffected piety which winds through it, and occasionally discovers itself as he proceeds. When in the opening of this fine exordium he addresses himself to the light, considering it as in some sort an attribute of God, he evidently speaks under an impression of such awe and reverence, as could only be felt by a mind habituated to divine contemplation. When afterwards, alluding to his constant and regular study of the divine writers, he says so musically—

> But chief
> Thee, Sion, and the flowery brooks beneath,
> That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,
> Nightly I visit—

knowing that this was not a *gratis dictum* for embellishment-sake merely, much less the language of ostentation, and that Milton was in truth, as he professed himself to be, frequently occupied in the study of Scripture, we respect and honour him for the just and manly avowal of it; and taking this acknowledged fact with us, are convinced that when, in the close of all, he prays for spiritual illumination, he asks it, not because it suited his poetical occasions to finish with a prayer, but because he really wished it, and hoped also to obtain it.

It ought likewise to be observed, for the honour of the Bible, that to his firm belief of it, and his familiar acquaintance with it, this divine poet, and truly such,

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was in a great measure indebted as well for the beauty of the style and sentiments, as for the matter of his poem.

LINE 70. —— *and Satan there.*

The reader will recollect that he left him, at the close of the second book, weighing his spread wings at leisure to behold, &c.

LINE 84. *Wide interrupt.*

Interrupt is a substantive of Milton's creation, who when the current language failed him, coined for his own use, and always well and wisely.

LINE 91. *If him by force he can destroy, or worse,*
By some false guile pervert.

The poet considers man's apostasy as worse than his destruction would have been, because he became by it involved in the guilt of his enemy, and a partaker of his rebellion.

LINE 96. —— *whose fault?*
Whose but his own?

See Isaiah, v. 3. " And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

LINE 129. *The first sort by their own suggestion fell.*

By the *first* he means the *angelic* sort, and gives the most probable reason, why man was considered as

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an object of mercy, while it was denied to the apostate angels.

LINE 134. *But mercy first and last.*

The words *first* and *last* may either refer to the promise of a Saviour given in the garden, and to the consummation of all things, or they may respect the original purpose of God to show mercy, and the subsequent application of it.

We have in this speech, not the divinity of the schools, but that of the Scripture. Here are no subtleties to puzzle the reader, no webs of sophistry to entangle him. The foreknowledge of God in Milton's opinion of it, fetters not the will of man. Man is not represented here as the blind and impotent slave of an irresistible destiny, but as endowed with that high and rational privilege of option, which alone renders him an accountable creature, and which is therefore the very basis of God's right to judge him.

With respect to the composition of this speech, it is as unexceptionable as the matter of it. The expressions are nervous, and notwithstanding the abstruseness of the subject, beautifully clear. The lines are also harmonious, nor is the great poet less apparent in such a passage as this than in the most flowery description. Let it be tried by Horace's rule; divest it of measure, cast the words into their natural order, do what you please with it, you can never make it prose.

It is impossible to close this short comment upon it, without adverting for a moment to a line of Mr. Pope's which for the flippancy of it, considering whom it cen-

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sures, it might be wished that he never had written; that line in which he charges Milton with making

God the Father turn a school divine.

The doctrines here agitated, and in the other speeches which Milton ascribes to the two first persons in the Trinity (as Mr. Addison well observes) naturally grow up in a poem on the fall of man, and Mr. Pope must have been very little acquainted with the schoolmen, to have asserted that in Milton's manner of handling those doctrines, there is any thing that resembles theirs.

LINE 142. *Love without end, and without measure grace.*

The former half of the verse has a near affinity to that expression in Jeremiah—*I have loved thee with an everlasting love,* and the latter half of it to that of the apostle Paul—*Where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded.* We are pretty well acquainted with the abundance of sin, and therefore can easily conceive that if grace has abounded still more, it must be without measure.

LINE 166.

The reader may observe how judiciously this speech is accommodated to the character of the Son of God, as the advocate and intercessor of our fallen race. From beginning to end, it reasons, pleads, and argues on the side of man, and has in it much of the spirit and manner of the intercession used by Moses to avert the wrath of God from the people, when they murmured at the report of the Spies. See Numbers xiv. 13.

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LINE 174. *Yet not of will in him.*

" So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Romans ix. 16.

LINE 183. *Some I have chosen of peculiar grace, &c.*

It is not very easy to see how this opinion (the Editor is speaking of Dr. Newton's note) becomes entitled to the honourable appellation of *moderate Calvinism.* It supposes as much partiality to be shown in the distribution of grace, as is usually charged on Calvinism of any description; some to be saved infallibly, and others to be left to a peradventure. But the Scripture when it speaks of those, who shall be saved, and of the means, by which their salvation shall be accomplished, holds out the same hope to every man, and asserts the same communications of light and strength to be necessary in all cases equally.

LINE 196. *Light after light.*

" The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs iv. 18.

LINE 200. *But hard be hardened.*

" Yet they would not hear—But the word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." Isaiah xxviii. 12, 13.

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LINE 210. *Die he, or justice must.*

That such a propitiation was indispensably necessary to make the salvation of man consist with the honour of God's justice, is evident from Romans iii. 25, 26.

" Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation :— that he might be just, and the justifier of him, which believeth in Jesus."

The reader, however, since all are not conversant enough with Scripture to know it, is to be admonished, that the ensuing reference of this arduous enterprise to the angels, is a mere poetical fiction. Christ is always mentioned there, as the only *possible substitute*, because he alone was *worthy*.

LINE 233. —— *he her aid*
Can never seek.

" I was found of them, that sought me not, I was made manifest unto them, that asked not after me." Rom. x. 20.

It is certain that, till assisted by grace, there is nothing about which the heart of man concerns itself so little, as how he shall obtain it.

The very prayer for grace, if it be sincere and fervent, implies the previous communication of it.

LINE 245. ——*and am his due.*

Due by voluntary stipulation to stand in the offender's place, not otherwise.

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LINE 260. *Then with the multitude of my redeem'd.*

" Behold I, and the children, whom the Lord hath given to me." Isaiah viii. 18.

Which words the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews expressly gives to the Redeemer. See Hebrews xi. 13.

LINE 276. *My sole complacence!*

In whom alone I am well pleased. Whose obedience unto death is the sole efficient cause of my reconcilement to guilty man.

LINE 278. *Though last created; that for him I spare.*

The word *that* must here be understood in the sense of *because*. Thou knowest how dear he is to me, *because* to save him I spare thee from my bosom.

LINE 290. ——*thy merit Imputed.*

Faith in the righteousness of the Son of man, as the instrument and means of our justification in the sight of God, is itself considered as righteousness, and for the sake of that faith it is, that creatures, unrighteous in themselves, are yet accepted. See Corinthians i. 30.

" But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

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LINE 305. *Because thou hast, &c.*

Through this whole period ending at line 322, the poet builds on that passage of Psalm xlv. 6, 7.

" A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

" Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

LINE 341. *God shall be all in all.*

It may not be amiss at the close of these admirable speeches, as admirable for their sound divinity, as for the perspicuity with which it is expressed, to allow ourselves a moment's pause for the purpose of taking a short retrospect of the doctrines contained in them.

Man in the beginning, is placed in a probationary state and made the arbiter of his own destiny. By his own fault he forfeits happiness both for himself and for his descendants. But mercy interposes for his restoration. That mercy is represented as perfectly free, as vouchsafed to the most unworthy; to creatures so entirely dead in sin, as to be destitute even of a sense of their need of it, and consequently too stupid ever to ask it. They are also as poor as they are unfeeling, and were it possible that they could affect themselves with a just sense and apprehension of their lapsed condition, have no compensation to offer to their offended Maker, nothing with which they can satisfy the demands of his justice, in short, no atonement. In this ruinous state of their affairs, and when all hope of reconciliation seems lost for ever, the Son of God

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voluntarily undertakes for them: undertakes to become the Son of Man also, and to suffer in Man's stead the penalty annexed for his transgression. In consequence of this self-substitution Christ becomes the fœderal head of his church, and the sole author of salvation to his people. As Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity, so the faultless obedience of the second Adam is imputed to all, who, in the great concern of justification, shall renounce their own obedience as imperfect, and therefore incompetent.

The sentence is thus reversed as to all believers, "Death is swallowed up in Victory,"—the Saviour presents the redeemed before the throne of the eternal Father, in whose countenance no longer any symptom of displeasure appears against them, but their joy and peace are thenceforth perfect. The general resurrection takes place, the saints are made assessors with Christ in the judgement both of men and angels, the new heaven and earth, the destined habitation of the just, succeed; the Son of God, his whole undertaking accomplished, surrenders the kingdom to his Father, and God becomes All in All.

It is easy to see, that among these doctrines there are some, which in modern times have been charged with novelty; but, how new they are Milton is a witness.

THE END.

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